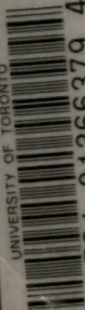


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GUY DE MAUPASSANT

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*Pierre and Jean* (67)

AND OTHER STORIES



POPULAR EDITION SERIES

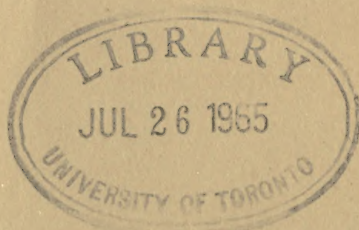
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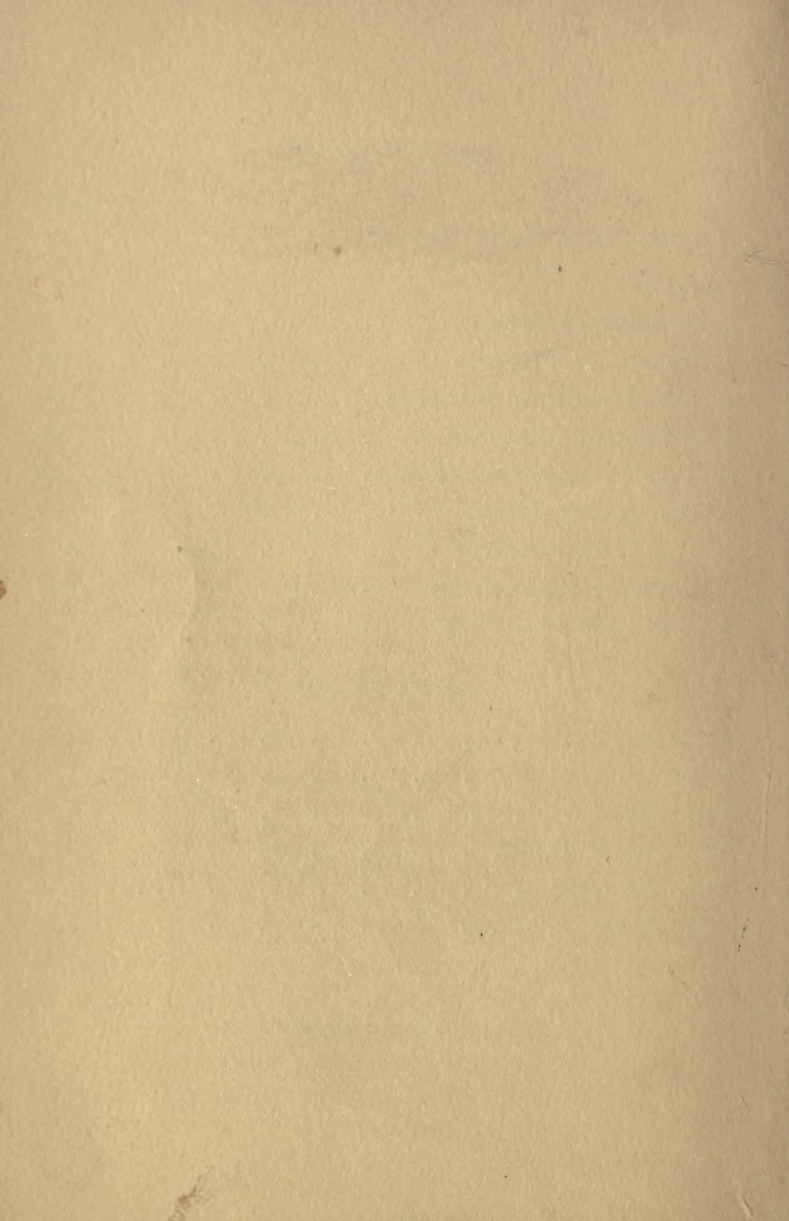
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## THE NOVEL



HAVE no intention of pleading here the cause of the following little novel. On the contrary, the ideas which I shall attempt to elucidate would involve rather a criticism of the style of psychological study which I have undertaken in *Pierre and Jean*.

I wish to discuss the novel in general.

I am not the only one to whom the same reproach is addressed by the same critics every time that a new book appears.

In the midst of eulogistic phrases I regularly find the following criticisms, from the same pens:

“The greatest defect of this work is that it is not a novel, properly speaking.”

One could reply by the same argument:

“The greatest defect of the writer who does me the honor to sit in judgment on my work is that he is not a critic.”



What, in fact, are the essential characteristics of a critic?

He must, without partisanship, without preconceived opinions, without the ideas of any school, without any connection with any clique of artists—he must comprehend, distinguish, and explain the most opposite tendencies and the most contrary temperaments, and appreciate artistic essays of the most diverse forms.

The critic who, after *Manon Lescaut*, *Paul and Virginia*, *Don Quixote*, *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, *Werther*, *Elective Affinities*, *Clarissa Harlowe*, *Emile*, *Candide*, *Cinq-Mars*, *René*, *The Three Musketeers*, *Mauprat*, *Le Père Goriot*, *Cousine Bette*, *Colombe*, *Rouge et Noir*, *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, *Notre Dame de Paris*, *Salammbô*, *Madame Bovary*, *Adolphe*, *M. de Camors*, *L'Assommoir*, *Sapho*, etc., still dares to write, "This is a novel and this is not," seems to me to be endowed with a perspicacity which is very much like incompetence.

Such a critic usually understands by a novel an adventure more or less probable, arranged like a drama in three acts, the first containing the exposition, the second the action, and the last the *dénouement*.

This manner of composing a novel is certainly admissible on condition that we deal with all in the same manner.

Do there exist rules for writing a novel, outside of which a written narrative ought to bear another name?

If *Don Quixote* is a novel, is *Rouge et Noir* another? If *Monte Cristo* is one, is *L'Assommoir* another? Can any comparison be established

between the *Elective Affinities* of Goethe, the *Three Musketeers* of Dumas, *Madame Bovary* by Flaubert, *M. de Camors* by Octave Feuillet, and *Germinal* by Zola? Which of these works is a novel? Where are the famous rules? Where did they come from? Who established them? In virtue of what principle, what authority, what course of reasoning, do they exist?

It seems, however, that these critics know, in some certain, indubitable manner, what constitutes a novel, and what distinguishes it from another which is not one. This simply means that, without being producers, they are enlisted in a certain school, and reject, just as the novelists themselves do, all works conceived and executed outside of their code of æsthetics.

An intelligent critic, on the contrary, ought to seek for everything that is as different as possible from the novels already written, and to urge young authors, as earnestly as they can, to strike out new paths.

All writers, Victor Hugo as well as Zola, have persistently claimed the absolute, indisputable right of composing—that is, of imagining or observing—according to their personal conception of art. Talent comes from originality, which is a special manner of thinking, seeing, understanding, and judging. Now, the critic who assumes to define the “novel” according to the ideas he has formed from the novels he likes, and to lay down certain invariable rules of composition, will always be hostile to the genius of the artist who introduces a new style. A critic, to really deserve the name, should be nothing but an analyst, without bias, without preferences, without passions; and, like an art critic, take into

account only the artistic value of the object of art submitted to him. His comprehension ought to be all-embracing, and ought so completely to absorb his personality that he can praise and commend the very books which, as a man, he does not like, and which he must estimate in the character of a judge.

Most critics, however, are merely readers; and the result is that they nearly always lash us unmercifully, unreservedly, and without stint, or else compliment us.

The reader who seeks in a book merely to satisfy the natural bent of his mind demands that the writer shall minister to his predominating taste; and he invariably describes as remarkable or "well written" the work or the passage which pleases his imagination, be it idealistic, gay, loose, sad, dreamy, or realistic.

In brief, the public is composed of numerous groups that cry out to us:

"Comfort me."

"Amuse me."

"Touch my sympathies."

"Make me sad."

"Make me dream."

"Make me laugh."

"Make me shiver."

"Make me weep."

"Make me think."

Some chosen spirits alone ask of the artist:

"Make something beautiful, in the form which suits you best, according to your temperament."

The artist essays, succeeds, or fails. The critic ought to judge of the result only by the nature of the effort: he has no right to take account of tendencies.



This has been written a thousand times already, but it will be always necessary to repeat it.

Thus after the literary schools which have sought to give us a deformed, superhuman, poetic, tender, charming, or superb vision of life, there has come a realistic, or naturalistic, school, which professes to show us the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

These different schools of art must be accepted with equal interest, and the works that they produce must be judged solely from the point of view of their artistic value, admitting *a priori* the general ideas which give birth to them.

To deny the right of an author to compose a poetic work, or a realistic work, is to seek to force him to modify his temperament, to reject his originality, and not to allow him the eye and the intelligence which Nature has bestowed on him.

To reproach him for seeing beautiful or hideous things, small things or epics, gracious or displeasing things, is to reproach him with being made in such or such a manner, and with not having a power of vision that agrees with our own.

Let us leave him free to understand, to observe, to convince as he pleases, provided he be an artist. Let us rise to the heights of poetry when we criticise an idealist, and show him that his dream is commonplace, vulgar, not mad enough or magnificent enough. But if we criticise a naturalist, let us show him wherein the truth in life differs from the truth in his book.

It is evident that schools that differ so widely must employ absolutely opposite methods of composition.

The novelist who transforms the brutal, unpleas-

ant, unvarying truth, in order to draw from it some charming and exceptional incident, ought, without any exaggerated regard for probability, to manipulate events at his pleasure, and prepare and arrange them so as to arouse the reader's pleasure, emotion, or sympathy. The plan of his novel is a mere series of ingenious combinations, skillfully leading to the *dénouement*. The incidents are disposed and graduated to the climax and the termination, which is the crowning decisive event, satisfying all the curiosity awakened at the beginning, barring any further interest, and terminating so completely the story told that we no longer desire to know what will happen to-morrow to the personages who had enchained our interest.

The novelist, on the other hand, who professes to give us an exact image of life ought carefully to avoid every concatenation of events that seems exceptional. His object is not to tell a story, to amuse us, to touch our pity, but to compel us to think, and to understand the deep, hidden meaning of events. Through having seen and meditated, he looks at the universe, things, facts, and men, in a manner peculiar to himself, the result of the combined effect of observation and reflection. He seeks to impart to us this personal vision of the world by reproducing it in his book. In order to move us as he himself has been moved by the spectacle of life, he must reproduce it before our eyes with scrupulous accuracy. He will have, then, to compose his work so skilfully, with such apparent simplicity, as to conceal his plot and render it impossible to discover his intentions.

Instead of taking an incident and developing it in a manner to render it interesting down to the *dé-*



*nouement*, he will introduce his character or characters at a certain period of their lives, and conduct them, by natural transitions, down to the following period. In this way he will show, at times, how minds are modified under the influence of surrounding circumstances; and, again, how sentiments and passions are developed, how we love, hate, combat each other, in all social conditions; how business interests, money interests, family interests, and political interests, all vie with one another.

The skilful execution of his plan, then, will not consist in emotion or charm, in a fascinating beginning or an affecting catastrophe, but in the adroit grouping of little everyday facts from which the definitive meaning of the work may be gathered. If, in three hundred pages, he can portray ten years of a life for the purpose of showing its peculiar and characteristic significance in relation to all the beings that surrounded it, he ought to know how to eliminate, among the innumerable little daily events, all those which are useless to him, and to place in a strong and distinct light all those which would have remained unperceived by less clear-sighted observers, and which give his book the power and its value as a whole.

One can understand how such a manner of composition, so different from the old method, apparent to all eyes, often bewilders the critics, and that they do not discover the fine, secret, almost invisible threads employed by certain modern artists in place of the single thread which was called "the plot."

In brief, if the novelist of yesterday selected and related the crises of life, the poignant emotions of soul and heart, the novelist of to-day writes the his-

tory of the heart, the soul, and the intellect, in their normal condition. To produce the effect he aims at, that is, the feeling of simple reality, and to bring out the artistic lesson which he desires to draw from it, that is, the revelation of the real contemporary man before his eyes, he must employ only actual and incontestable facts. But if we place ourselves at the very point of view of those realistic artists, we must discuss and contest their theory, which seems to be summed up in these words, "The whole truth, and nothing but the truth."

Their intention being to bring out the philosophy of certain current everyday facts, they are often obliged to change events in the interest of probability and to the detriment of truth, for

*"Le vrai peut quelquefois n'être pas vraisemblable"* (Truth may sometimes be improbable).

The realist, if he is an artist, will seek, not to show us a vulgar photograph of life, but to give us a more complete, striking, and convincing vision of life than the reality itself.

It would be impossible to narrate everything, for it would require at least a volume a day to enumerate the multitude of insignificant incidents that fill up our existence.

Some selection is therefore imposed on the writer, and this is the first blow at the theory of the "whole truth."

Life, besides, is composed of the most different, most unforeseen, most contrary, and most incongruous things; it is brutal, without sequence or connection, full of inexplicable, illogical, and contradictory catastrophes which ought to be classed under the heading, "Various Events."

That is why the artist, having chosen his theme,

selects in this life, incumbered as it is with accidents and trivialities, only those details necessary to his subject, and will cast all the rest aside.

One example out of a thousand. The number of people in the world who die every day by accident is considerable. But we cannot make a tile fall on the head of a principal character, or throw him under the wheels of a carriage in the middle of a story, under pretext that it is necessary to introduce an accident.

Life, again, leaves everything just as it finds it, precipitates action, or drags it out indefinitely. Art, on the contrary, consists in using forethought and care in elaboration, bringing into prominence, through sheer skill in composition, the essential incidents, and in giving to all the rest the degree of prominence proportioned to their importance, in order to produce a convincing impression of the special truth it seeks to portray.

To make things real consists, therefore, in giving a complete similitude of truth according to the ordinary logical sequence of facts, and not in transcribing them, servilely, one after another, in the order of their successive occurrence.

Hence, I conclude that the realists of art ought rather to call themselves the illusionists.

How puerile it is, besides, to believe in reality, when we each carry our own idea of truth in our mind and our senses. Our eyes, our ears, our sense of smell, our taste, are all different, and create as many ideas of truth as there are men on the earth. And our minds, receiving their information from these senses, are diversely impressed, and understand, analyze and judge as if each of us belonged to a different race.



Each of us, then, simply creates a world according to his own imagination, a poetical, sentimental, joyful, melancholy, obscene, or lugubrious illusion, according to his nature. And the writer's only mission is to reproduce faithfully this illusion by means of all the devices of art of which he is master and that he knows best how to employ.

Illusion of the beautiful, a mere human convention! Illusion of the disagreeable, a varying opinion! Illusion of the true, never immutable! Illusion of the ignoble, attractive to so many! Great artists are those who impose on mankind their particular illusions!

Let us not, then, lose our tempers over any theory, since each one of them is simply the generalized expression of an individual temperament.

Two theories, in particular, have frequently aroused discussion through being opposed to each other, instead of both one and the other being accepted on an equal footing; these are the theory of the analytical novel, and the theory of the objective novel. The partisans of analysis demand that the writer shall devote his attention to describing the slightest evolution of a soul, and all the most secret motives that determine action, giving to the action itself a place of very secondary importance. It is merely a peg on which to hang history. According to them, these analytical, dreamy novels in which imagination is confounded with observation should be composed after the manner of a philosopher writing a book on psychology, revealing causes by tracing them back to their most distant origin, telling all the whys of all resolves, and discerning all the struggles of a soul acting under the impulse of interest, passion, or instinct.

The partisans of objectivity (what an odious word!) profess, on the contrary, to give us an exact representation of what takes place in life; they carefully avoid all complicated explanations and all dissertations on motives, and limit themselves to placing before our eyes personages and events.

In their view psychology ought to be concealed in a book, as it is concealed, in reality, beneath the facts of existence.

Novels conceived on this plan gain thereby in interest, in action, in color, and in stirring life.

In place, then, of describing at length the condition of mind of a character, authors who deal with the objective seek for the special action or gesture to which this state of mind would inevitably lead under certain definite conditions. And they make him conduct himself in such a manner, from one end of the volume to the other, that all his acts, all his movements, shall be the reflection of his inmost nature, of all his thoughts, all his resolves, all his doubts. They hide their psychology instead of displaying it; they make it the framework of the book, as the invisible bony system is the frame of the human body. The painter who paints our portrait does not show our skeleton.

It seems to me that a novel thus executed gains likewise in sincerity. In the first place, it is nearer the truth, for the people we see in action around us do not confide to us their motives of action.

We must next take into account that if, by dint of observation, we can ascertain the nature of men so exactly as to foresee their course of conduct under almost all circumstances; if we can say with precision: "Such a man, of such a temperament,



in such a case will do thus or so"—it does not follow that we can ascertain, one by one, all the secret evolutions of his mind, which is not our mind; all the mysterious temptations of his instincts, which are not similar to ours, nor all the confused proclivities of his nature, with its senses, nerves, blood, and flesh differing from our own.

Whatever be the genius of a weak, passionless man, loving solely science and work, he can never enter so completely into the body and soul of a robust, sensual, violent nature, stirred by every desire and even by every vice, as to comprehend and describe the secret impulses and sensations of such a different being, even though he may clearly foresee and narrate all the acts of his life.

In brief, the author who deals with psychology alone can only describe himself in describing his characters in the various situations in which he places them; for it is impossible for him to change his senses, which are the sole intermediaries between ourselves and external life, and impress us with their perceptions, determining our sensibilities and creating in us a soul essentially different from those that surround us. Our point of view and our knowledge of the world, acquired by the aid of our senses, and our ideas of life, can be only partially transferred to all the characters whose inmost, unknown being we pretend to be unveiling. It is always ourselves whom we exhibit in the form of a king, a murderer, a thief, or an honest man; of a courtesan, a nun, a young girl, or a market woman; for we are obliged to state the problem to ourselves in these terms: "If I were king, murderer, thief, courtesan, nun, young girl, or market woman, what would I do? What would I think? How would I

act? " We can, then, only diversify our personages by changing the age, sex, social position, and all the circumstances of the life of our *I*, which nature has surrounded with an impregnable barrier of organs.

Skill consists in not letting the reader recognize this *I* under all the different masks which serve to hide it.

But if, from the sole point of view of complete accuracy, purely psychological analysis is open to question, it may, nevertheless, give us as noble works of art as all the other methods of work.

To-day we have the symbolists. Why not? Their dream as artists is one to be respected; and they are particularly interesting, inasmuch as they know and proclaim the extreme difficulty of art.

In fact, one must be very mad, very daring, very presumptuous, or very stupid to write anything nowadays! After so many masters of such varied dispositions, of such manifold genius, what remains to be done that has not been done, what can be said that has not been said? Who among us can boast of having written a page or a phrase which cannot be found, almost verbatim, somewhere? When we, who are so saturated with French writings that our whole body gives us the impression of being kneaded up with phrases, take up a book, do we ever find a line or thought which is not familiar, or of which we have not had at least a confused presentiment?

The man who seeks only to amuse the public by already known methods writes with confidence, in the candor of his mediocrity, for the ignorant, the idle. But those on whom all the ages of past litera-

ture weigh heavily; those whom nothing satisfies, whom everything disgusts because it does not come up to their dreams; those to whom every flower seems to have been plucked, to whom their work always gives the impression of a useless and common labor—arrive at the opinion that literary art is an intangible, mysterious thing, only partially revealed to us in some of the pages of the greatest masters.

Twenty verses, twenty phrases, may suddenly thrill us to the heart as a surprising revelation; but the following verses resemble all verses, and the prose that follows resembles all other prose.

Men of genius, doubtless, do not experience this anguish and torture, because they have in themselves a resistless creative power. They do not sit in judgment on themselves. The rest of us, who are simply conscientious and persistent workers, can only by continued effort fight against overwhelming discouragement.

Two men by their simple and lucid teachings gave me this power of persistent effort—Louis Bouilhet and Gustave Flaubert.

If I speak of them and of myself in this place it is because their advice, summed up in a few lines, may be useful, perhaps, to some young writers with less self-esteem than is usually found in literary débutants.

Bouilhet, with whom I formed a rather intimate acquaintance about two years before I gained the friendship of Flaubert, by dint of repeating to me that a hundred verses, or even less, insured the reputation of an artist, provided they were faultless and embodied the essence of the talent and originality of a man, even of second-rate talent, made me understand that.



I also learned that the best-known writers have seldom left more than one volume; and that the first essential is to have the luck to find and discern, amid the multiplicity of subjects that present themselves, that subject that will absorb all our faculties, all our ability, all our artistic power.

Later, Flaubert, whom I sometimes saw, conceived a liking for me. I ventured to submit to him some of my attempts. He kindly read them, and replied: "I do not know if you have talent; what you have shown me proves that you possess a certain degree of intelligence. But do not forget this, young man, that talent—to quote the saying of Buffon—is merely 'long patience.' Keep on working."

I did so, and often revisited him, as I perceived that he liked me, for he laughingly called me his disciple.

For seven years I wrote verses, I wrote stories, I wrote novels, I even wrote a detestable play. Of these nothing survives. The master read them all, and on the following Sunday at luncheon he would give me his criticism, and inculcate little by little two or three principles that sum up his long and patient lessons. "If one has any originality, the first thing requisite is to bring it out; if one has none, the first thing to be done is to acquire it."

Talent is long patience. Everything which one desires to express must be considered with sufficient attention, and during a sufficiently long time, to discover in it some aspect which no one has as yet seen or described. In everything there is still some spot unexplored, because we are accustomed to look at things only with the recollection of what others before us have thought of the subject we

are contemplating. The smallest object contains something unknown. Let us find it. In order to describe a fire that flames, and a tree on the plain, we must keep looking at that flame and that tree, until to our eyes they no longer resemble any other tree, or any other fire.

This is the way to become original.

Having, besides, laid down this truth that there are not in the whole world two grains of sand, two specks, two hands, or two noses alike, Flaubert compelled me to describe, in a few phrases, a being or an object in such a manner as to clearly particularize it and distinguish it from all the other beings, or all the other objects of the same race or the same species.

“When you pass,” he would say, “a grocer seated at his shop door, a janitor smoking his pipe, a stand of hackney coaches, show me that grocer and that janitor, their attitude, their whole physical appearance, including also by a skilful description their whole moral nature, so that I cannot confound them with any other grocer or any other janitor; make me see, in one word, that a certain cab horse does not resemble the fifty others that follow or precede it.”

I have stated elsewhere his ideas on style. They are closely related to the theory of observation which I have just explained.

Whatever be the thing one wishes to say, there is only one noun to express it, only one verb to give it life, only one adjective to qualify it. We must search, then, till that noun, that verb, that adjective, are discovered; never be content with an approximation, never resort to tricks, however happy, or to buffooneries of language, to avoid a difficulty.



We can interpret and describe the most subtle things if we bear in mind the verse of Boileau:

“ *D'un mot mis en sa place enseigna le pouvoir* ”  
(He taught the force of a word in the right place).

There is no need of the eccentric, complicated, multifarious sort of Chinese vocabulary, which is inflicted on us at the present day under the name of artistic writing, to enable us to describe every shade of thought; but it is necessary to discern, with the utmost lucidity, all the modifications of the value of a word according to the position it occupies. Let us have fewer nouns, verbs, and adjectives with almost incomprehensible meanings, and more varied phrases, differently constructed, ingeniously turned, sonorous and full of skilful rhythms. Let us endeavor to be excellent stylists, rather than collectors of rare terms.

It is, in fact, more difficult to turn a phrase to suit one's self, to make it say everything (even that which it does not express), to fill it with hidden meanings, and with secret suggestions which are not formulated, than to invent new expressions, or to seek in the depths of old forgotten books all those that are obsolete and have lost their significance, and for us are only dead words.

The French language, moreover, is a limpid stream which mannerists have never been able, and never will be able, to trouble. Every century has thrown into this limpid current its fashions, its pretentious archaisms, and its affectations, without any of these useless attempts and impotent efforts rising to its surface. The nature of the language is to be clear, logical, and nervous. It refuses to be enfeebled, obscured, or corrupted.

Those who to-day write descriptions without

careful attention to abstract terms, those who make the rain or hail fall on the *cleanness* of the window panes, may also fling stones at the simplicity of their fellow workers. They may hit, perhaps, the fellow workers that possess a body, but they will never reach the simplicity which has none.

GUY DE MAUPASSANT.

La Guillette, Etretat, Sept., 1887.



## PIERRE AND JEAN

### CHAPTER I

#### SURPRISING NEWS



"Hi!" exclaimed Monsieur Roland abruptly after a quarter of an hour's silence, during which he had remained motionless, his eyes fixed on the water, occasionally raising his line very gently to see if he had a bite by a slight movement, feeling the line he had dropped down into the sea.

Madame Roland had been dozing at the stern by the side of Madame Rosémilly, who had been invited to join the party, but roused herself at her husband's exclamation, and, turning her head toward him, asked:

"Well, what is it, Gérôme?"

He replied in a tone of vexation:

"Can't get another bite. Since noon I've caught

nothing. One ought never to go fishing with women; they delay one in starting."

His two sons, Pierre and Jean, who were sitting, one on the starboard, the other on the port side, each with a line over his forefinger, began to laugh at the same instant, and Jean replied:

"You are not very gallant to our guest, papa!"

Monsieur Roland was confused, and made his excuses.

"I beg pardon, Madame Rosémilly, but I cannot help it. I invite ladies because I like their company, but as soon as I find myself on the water, I think of nothing but fish."

Madame Roland was now wide awake, and was gazing with a softened air at the wide stretch of cliffs and sea. She murmured:

"Still, you have had good sport."

Her husband shook his head in negation, while he cast a satisfied glance at the basket where the fish, caught by the three men, were still gasping weakly with a low sound of sticky scales and quivering fins, of weak, ineffectual struggles, as they opened their mouths in the deadly air.

Monsieur Roland took the hamper between his knees and tipped it till the silver flood of creatures reached the edge, in order to see those at the bottom. They gasped more perceptibly their death agony, and their pungent odor, with the wholesome smell, arose from the full basket.

The old fisherman inhaled it greedily, as if it were the scent of roses, and declared:

"By George! They are fresh, these fellows," and then continued:

"How many have you caught, doctor?"

The elder son, Pierre, a man of thirty, with



black whiskers closely trimmed, but without mustache, replied:

"Not many. Three or four."

The father turned to the younger son.

"And you, Jean?"

Jean, a tall, light-haired youth, with a full beard, and considerably younger than his brother, smiled as he answered:

"About the same as Pierre. Four or five."

They always told him the same lies, and delighted the old fellow beyond measure.

He rolled his line round a rowlock, and, crossing his arms, announced:

"I'll never again try to fish in the afternoon. After ten o'clock, it is all over. The rascals will not bite; they take a siesta in the sun."

The good man looked at the surrounding sea with the satisfied air of a proprietor.

He had been a jeweler in Paris, but an irresistible love of sailing and fishing dragged him from his counter as soon as he had acquired a modest competence. He left Paris and betook himself to Havre, where he bought a boat and became an amateur sailor. His two sons, Pierre and Jean, remained in Paris to continue their studies, and came occasionally, during vacation, to share their father's amusements.

The elder son, Pierre, five years older than Jean, on leaving college had felt a vocation for various professions in succession. He tried half a dozen, one after another, and, quickly disgusted with each, plunged at once into new attempts.

Finally, medicine tempted him, and he set to work with such ardor that he received his degree as doctor after a brief course of study, further

shortened by exemption granted by the authorities. He was intelligent, changeable, and tenacious, full of utopian and philosophical ideas.

Jean, as fair as Pierre was dark, as calm as his brother was excitable, as sweet tempered as his brother was spiteful, had quietly studied law, and obtained his diploma at the same time that Pierre graduated in medicine.

Both were now taking a holiday with their family, and both had formed the project of establishing themselves at Havre, if they could succeed in doing so satisfactorily.

But a vague jealousy—one of those dormant jealousies which grow up almost invisibly between brothers or sisters, till they mature, and burst forth on the occasion of a marriage or of a piece of good luck happening to one—kept them on the alert in a state of fraternal and inoffensive hostility. They certainly loved each other, but they spied on each other. Pierre, who was five years old when Jean was born, regarded, with the dislike of a spoiled little animal, this other little animal, which suddenly appeared in the arms of his father and mother, and was so caressed and beloved by them.

Jean had been from childhood a model of gentleness, goodness, and even temper; and Pierre gradually became wearied of hearing the continual praise of his big brother, for to him his gentleness seemed effeminacy, his goodness, foolishness, and his kindness, blindness. His parents, good, easy people, who dreamed of their sons occupying honorable commonplace positions, reproached him with his fickleness, his enthusiasms, his abortive attempts, all his ineffective impulses toward larger ideas and the ornamental arts.

After he attained manhood, they no longer said to him, "Look at Jean, and follow his example," but whenever he heard, "Jean did this, Jean did that," he understood clearly this hidden allusion, and the meaning of the words.

Their mother, a good housewife, rather sentimental, was continually appeasing the little rivalries that sprang up every day between her two big sons over little matters of everyday life. At this moment her peace of mind was disturbed by a trifling event which she feared might lead to a complication. During the winter, while her sons were completing their special studies, she made the acquaintance of a neighbor, Madame Rosémilly, widow of a ship captain who had died at sea two years before. She was quite young, only twenty-three, a capable woman, who knew life by instinct like a wild animal, as if she had seen, experienced, comprehended, and weighed all possible events, of which she formed an estimate in a sound, narrow, and benevolent spirit. She had fallen into the habit of coming over in the evening with her embroidery to chat with her neighbors, who always offered her a cup of tea.

Monsieur Roland, whose craze for a sailor's life was taking a greater hold of him, inquired about the deceased captain from their new friend, and she spoke of him, of his voyages, his old yarns, without embarrassment, like a sensible woman resigned to her loss, who loves life and respects death.

The sons, on their return home, finding this pretty widow installed in the house, at once began to pay her attention, less through a desire to please her than from a longing to supplant each other.

Their mother, with her practical common sense,



hoped that one of them would be successful, for the young widow was rich, but she did not wish the other brother to feel hurt.

Madame Rosémilly was a blonde, with blue eyes, a crown of fluffy hair that fluttered in the slightest breeze, and a little bold, defiant air which was not in keeping with her sensible disposition.

She seemed already to prefer Jean, attracted to him by a similarity of character. This preference, however, was only shown by an almost imperceptible difference in voice and look, and by the fact that she sometimes took his advice.

She seemed to divine that Jean's opinion would agree with hers, while that of Pierre would as surely be different. When she spoke about the doctor's ideas in politics, art, philosophy or morals, she would occasionally say "Your nonsense." Then he would look at her with the cold stare of a magistrate who is preparing an indictment against all women, poor creatures.

Before the return of his sons, Monsieur Roland had never invited her to go out fishing; nor, indeed, did he ever take his wife with him, for he liked to set out at daybreak with Captain Beausire, an old skipper whom he had met on the quay at high tide, and who had become an intimate friend, and the old sailor, Papagris, commonly called Jean Bart, who was the boatkeeper.

One evening in the preceding week, Madame Rosémilly, who had dined with them, observed, "Fishing must be amusing, is it not?" and the retired jeweler, flattered in his ruling passion, and possessed with a desire to make converts, exclaimed:

"Will you come with us?"

"Oh, yes."



“ Next Tuesday? ”

“ Yes, next Tuesday.”

“ Have you the courage to start at five in the morning? ”

“ Oh, no, certainly not! ” she cried in astonishment.

He was disappointed and chilled, and began to doubt her earnestness. Nevertheless, he asked:

“ At what hour can you start? ”

“ Well—at nine! ”

“ Not before? ”

“ No, not before. Even that is too early! ”

Monsieur Roland hesitated. They would certainly not catch anything, for when the sun is bright the fish do not bite; but the two brothers were zealous in making all the arrangements and settling everything at once.

On the following Tuesday the *Pearl* cast anchor beneath the white rocks of the cape of La Hève; they fished with success till noon, then rested, and fished again without catching anything, and Roland, discovering somewhat late in the day that Madame Rosémilly really cared for nothing but the sail, and, seeing that there was no sign of a nibble at his lines, uttered, in an access of unreasoning impatience, an energetic “ Bah! ” which was addressed as much to the uninterested widow as to the fish that would not be caught.

He was at present engaged in gazing on the captured fish, his fish, with the trembling joy of a miser; then he looked to the sky and remarked that the sun was sinking.

“ Well, boys,” he said, “ shall we go back toward shore? ”

The sons both drew in their lines, reeled them,

cleaned their hooks, and stuck them into their corks, and then waited.

Monsieur Roland stood up to look at the horizon in seafaring style.

"No more wind," he said; "we must row, my lads."

Then, with his arm pointing to the north, he added:

"Look, there's the Southampton packet."

The smooth sea lay stretched out like a piece of blue cloth, boundless, gleaming with reflections of gold and fire, and away in the direction indicated a blackish cloud ascended against the rosy sky. Below it was seen the ship, which at such a distance seemed quite small. Southward were numerous other clouds of smoke, all approaching the pier of Havre, the white line of which, with its tall, erect lighthouse at the end, was scarcely visible.

Roland asked:

"Isn't the *Normandie* due to-day?"

Jean replied:

"Yes, papa."

"Give me my glass. I believe she is there."

He pulled out the brass tube, adjusted the instrument to his eye, and then, delighted with seeing her, exclaimed:

"Yes, yes, it is the *Normandie*; I recognize her two smokestacks! Will you have a look, Madame Rosémilly?"

She took the glass and turned it toward the distant American steamer, doubtless without bringing it into the field, for she could distinguish nothing but some blue with a circle of color, a round rainbow, and then strange objects, like a kind of eclipses, which made her feel quite sick.

She returned the glass with the words:

"I never could use that instrument, and it always provoked my husband, for he would remain for hours at the window watching the ships pass."

Monsieur Roland was vexed as he replied:

"It must be the fault of your eyes, for my glass is a very good one."

Then he offered it to his wife.

"Will you take a look?"

"No, thank you; I know beforehand that I could not see."

Madame Roland, a woman of forty-eight, who did not show her age, seemed to enjoy, more than the rest, the sail and the close of the day.

Her chestnut hair had just commenced to whiten. She had a calm, thoughtful air—a happy, kindly air pleasant to see. According to a remark of her son Pierre, she knew the value of money, which did not prevent her from enjoying the charm of revery. She loved to read romances and poetry, not for their value as works of art, but for the tender and melancholy dreaminess they awoke in her. A verse, often commonplace, often bad, set the little string in vibration, as she would say, and gave her the feeling of a mysterious desire almost realized. She felt a pleasure in these light emotions that somewhat troubled her soul, which was as well kept as an account book.

Since her arrival at Havre she had become visibly stouter, and this made her once slender and supple figure rather heavy.

This excursion on the water had charmed her. Her husband, without being ill-natured, bullied her just as despots in an office bully underlings, without anger or dislike, and with whom a command is like



an oath. In the presence of strangers he restrained himself, but in his family he was not so careful, and assumed terrible airs, although he was afraid of everybody. She, in her dislike of noise, scenes, and useless explanations, always yielded and never asked for anything; she had not dared even ask, for a long time back, to join in a sail. It was with joy, then, that she seized this occasion, and tasted this rare and novel pleasure.

From the time they left the shore, she gave herself up utterly, body and soul, to the enjoyment of gently gliding over the water. She did not think, she did not dwell on memories or hopes; it seemed to her that her heart, like her body, was floating over something soft, fluid, delicious, which lulled her into apathy.

When the father gave the order, "Come, get to your oars," she smiled as she saw her two big sons take off their jackets and roll up their shirtsleeves.

Pierre, who was nearest the two ladies, took the starboard oar, Jean that on the larboard side, and they waited till the master cried, "Oars all!" for he stickled about having these manœuvres executed according to rule.

Then, at one dash, they dipped their oars, and swung back with all their force, and tried to rival each other in the vigor of their strokes. They had set out quietly, with sails set, but the breeze had fallen, and the masculine pride of the two brothers was at once aroused at the prospect of measuring their strength against each other.

Whenever they went fishing with their father alone, they rowed without the rudder, for Roland prepared the lines while watching the course of the boat, which he guided by a word or gesture. "Easy,



Jean." "Now, Pierre, pull," or perhaps he would say, "Come, *one*, now *two*, more elbow grease." Then the lazy one pulled stronger, and the other took it more easily, till the boat resumed a straight course.

To-day they wanted to show their muscle. Pierre's arms were hairy, rather thin but nervous; those of Jean, plump and white, rather pink, with a mass of muscles that played beneath the skin.

Pierre had the advantage at first. With teeth set, brow wrinkled, legs stretched, hands clinching the oar, he made it bend at every stroke, and the *Pearl* would swerve aside. Monsieur Roland, sitting in the bow to leave the stern to the ladies, roared out, "Easy, number *one*; pull, number *two*." Then number *one* pulled harder, and *two* could not reply to his disorderly stroke.

At length the captain gave the word "Stop." The two oars rose together, and Jean, by his father's orders, pulled a few strokes alone. But from that moment he had the advantage; he grew animated and heated, while Pierre, out of breath and exhausted by his rash efforts, grew weak. Four times Monsieur Roland made them stop in order to give the elder time to recover his wind, and to get the boat on her course. The doctor, his forehead covered with perspiration, his cheeks pale, and vexed and humiliated, stammered out:

"I do not know what ails me. I have a spasm at the heart. I started in very well, but that has strained my arm."

Jean asked, "Would you like me to take both oars?"

"No, thanks. It will soon pass."

Madame Roland, in a tone of annoyance, said:

“ Now, Pierre, what is the sense of putting yourself into such a condition? You are not a baby now.”

He shrugged his shoulders and resumed his rowing.

Madame Rosémilly pretended not to see, notice, or hear anything. Her little blonde head, at every movement of the boat, gave a pretty little toss backward, which shook the soft hair on her temples.

But Monsieur Roland cried, “ Hallo, there’s the *Prince Albert* overtaking us!” They all looked. Long, low, with its two smokestacks sloping astern, and its two yellow paddle boxes, like round cheeks, the Southampton packet came on at full speed, her deck covered with passengers and open parasols; her swift, noisy paddlewheels struck the water, making it foam, and giving her an air of haste, as of a special courier; while her upright bows cut the sea into two swelling waves, which glided, thin and transparent, along her sides.

When she was quite near the *Pearl*, Monsieur Roland lifted his hat, the two ladies waved their handkerchiefs, and the greeting was answered by half a dozen parasols waved from the steamer as she passed on, leaving a few slow waves behind her, on the tranquil and gleaming surface of the sea.

Other steamers came into view, hastening from all points of the compass to the short white dock, which swallowed them up, one after the other. Fishing boats and large sailing vessels, with their slender masts gliding against the sky, in tow of almost invisible tugs, all approached, slowly or swiftly, that devouring ogre, which at intervals seemed gorged to satiety, and would vomit forth to sea an-

other fleet of steamers, brigs, schooners, and three-masters, with their network of masts and spars. The steamers sped on, right or left, over the smooth bosom of the ocean, while the sailing ships, cast off by the tugs that had hauled them out, remained motionless, spreading from topmast to foremast their white or brown canvas, which seemed red in the setting sun.

Madame Roland, her eyes half closed, murmured:

“How beautiful the sea is!”

Madame Rosémilly replied, with a prolonged sigh, which, however, had no sadness in it:

“Yes, but it does plenty of mischief sometimes.”

Roland exclaimed:

“There’s the *Normandie* going into port. Is she not huge?”

Then he told all about the opposite coast yonder on the other side of the mouth of the Seine—which was twenty kilometers wide, that mouth—he said. He pointed out Villerville, Trouville, Houlgate, Luc, Arromanches, the river of Caen, and the rocks of Calvados, which render navigation dangerous as far as Cherbourg. Then he discussed the sandbanks of the Seine, which shift at every tide, and mislead even the pilots of Quillebœuf if they do not examine the channel every day. He bade them remark that Havre separated Upper and Lower Normandy. In Lower Normandy the flat coast, consisting of pasture lands, meadows, and fields, slopes down to the water’s edge. The coast of Upper Normandy, on the other hand, descends by steep, precipitous cliffs full of clefts and indentations to the sea, forming an immense white wall as far as Dunkirk, every cleft containing a village or a port—



Étretat, Fécamp, Saint Valery, Tréport, Dieppe, and so on.

The two ladies, who were in a state of apathetic comfort, were not listening; they did not speak, for they were somewhat overpowered by the vast expanse of air and water, and by the calm magnificence of the sunset. Roland, alone, never stopped talking; he was one of those whom nothing affects. Women, more nervous, sometimes feel that the sound of a useless voice is as irritating as an impertinence.

Pierre and Jean, now pacified, rowed on slowly, and the *Pearl* advanced to the harbor, looking diminutive by the side of the large ships.

When she touched the quay, the sailor, Papagris, who was waiting for them, assisted the ladies to land, and the party entered the town. A numerous, quiet crowd, the crowd that goes to the pier every day at high water, was also returning townward.

Mesdames Roland and Rosémilly led the way, followed by the three men. As they went up the Rue de Paris, they paused occasionally before a milliner's or goldsmith's shop to look at a hat or a trinket, and, after an exchange of ideas, resumed their walk.

Before the Place de la Bourse, Roland, as he did every day, looked at the merchants' dock, which was filled with ships and led into other docks, where the large hulls, with their sides touching, lay four or five deep. The countless masts along the many miles extent of quays, the masts with their yards, their vanes, and their ropes, gave to this opening in the middle of the town the aspect of a great dead forest. Above this leafless wood the gulls were circling, watching for all the refuse cast in the water, and dropping on it like a falling stone. A ship boy,



who was fixing a pulley at one end of the yards, looked as if he had climbed up to get a bird's nest.

"Will you take dinner with us, to finish the day together?" said Madame Roland to Madame Rosémilly.

"Yes, with pleasure. I accept informally. It would be melancholy to go home alone this evening."

Pierre, who had heard the remark, and whom the indifference of the young widow began to annoy, muttered, "Humph! the widow is putting on airs now." For some days he had called her "the widow." The word meant nothing, but the tone in which it was uttered seemed to him ill-natured and slighting.

The three men did not say another word until they reached their home. It was a narrow, two-story house, in the Rue Belle-Normande. The servant, Josephine, a country girl of about nineteen, at low wages, in whom the startled, animal look of the peasantry was exaggerated, opened the door, closed it after them, and followed her master to the reception room on the first floor. Then she said:

"A gentleman has been here three times."

Monsieur Roland, who never spoke to her without shouting and cursing, cried:

"Who is it that's been here? confound it!"

She was not disturbed at any time by these outbursts of her master, and continued:

"A gentleman from the notary."

"What notary?"

"Well, Monsieur Canu."

"And what did the gentleman say?"

"That Monsieur Canu would come himself this evening."

Monsieur Lecanu was the notary, and, to some extent, the friend of Roland, whose business he transacted. For him to announce a visit in the evening argued some urgent and important affair. The Rolands all looked at each other, as worried at this news as people of small means always are at the intervention of a lawyer, who awakens in their minds a host of ideas about contracts, legacies, lawsuits, and other things agreeable or disagreeable. After some seconds, Roland murmured:

“ What can this mean? ”

Madame Rosémilly began to laugh.

“ Why, it is a legacy, I’m sure. I bring good luck. ”

They were not, however, expecting the death of any one who was likely to leave them anything.

Madame Roland, blessed with an excellent memory for pedigrees, at once began to recall to mind all the marriages on her own and her husband’s side, and to trace out the connections and the various branches of cousins.

She asked, before even taking off her hat:

“ Tell me, father ” (she called her husband “ father ” at home, and sometimes “ Monsieur Roland ” before strangers), “ tell me, father, do you remember whom Joseph Lebru married when he took a second wife? ”

“ Yes, a little Dumenil, daughter of a paper manufacturer. ”

“ Has he any children? ”

“ Four or five, at the least, I believe. ”

“ No; there is nothing from that quarter. ”

She was becoming eager in this inquiry, and clung to this prospect of a little competence falling to them from the sky. But Pierre, who loved his

mother dearly, who knew her to be somewhat of a dreamer, and feared if her illusions were shattered, and the news, instead of being good, should turn out bad, that she would be annoyed and saddened, checked her by saying:

“Do not indulge in romance, mamma; there are no more rich American uncles. For my part, I should sooner believe that it is about a marriage for Jean.”

All were surprised at the idea, and Jean was somewhat annoyed that his brother should have spoken of such a thing before Madame Rosémilly.

“Why for me rather than for you? Your supposition is open to question. You are the oldest; you would be the first to be thought of. And then, as for me, I do not want to marry.”

Pierre giggled.

“You must be in love, then?”

The other, annoyed, replied:

“Must one be in love to say that one does not want to marry yet?”

“Good. The ‘yet’ explains all. You are waiting.”

“Let us grant that I am waiting, if you like.”

M. Roland, who had listened and reflected, all at once found the most probable solution.

“By Jove! we are all stupid to rack our brains thus. Monsieur Lecanu is a friend of ours. He knows that Pierre is looking for a doctor’s office, and Jean for a lawyer’s office: he has found how to place one of you.”

This was so simple and probable that everybody agreed.

“Dinner is ready,” said the maid. All went to

their rooms to wash their hands before sitting down to table.

Ten minutes later they were seated in the little dining room on the ground floor.

They did not talk much at first, but after a few minutes Roland once more expressed his surprise at this visit of the notary.

"In brief, why did he not write? Why did he send his clerk three times? Why is he coming himself?"

Pierre thought this quite natural.

"He wants an immediate answer, and perhaps he has to communicate some confidential matter, which one does not care to put in writing."

They remained, however, preoccupied, and somewhat out of sorts at having invited Madame Rosémilly to dinner, for it would prevent them from freely discussing the matter and forming their plans.

They had just ascended to the drawing-room when the notary was announced.

Roland rushed to meet him.

"Good day, my dear master."

He used the word *maître*, which is a title given to lawyers in France.

Madame Rosémilly rose.

"I am going home. I am very tired."

They feebly attempted to detain her, but she did not consent, and went off alone, without any of the three gentlemen escorting her as usual.

Madame Roland was very attentive to the newcomer.

"A cup of coffee, Monsieur Lecanu?"

"No, thanks. I have just risen from table."

"A cup of tea, then?"



“ I will not say no, but a little later. We must first talk business.”

In the profound silence which followed these words nothing but the rhythmical ticking of the clock was heard, and the noise from the lower story of the dishes being washed by the girl, who was too stupid to even listen at keyholes.

The lawyer began.

“ Did you know at Paris a certain Monsieur Maréchal—Léon Maréchal? ”

M. and Madame Roland uttered the same exclamation, “ Of course I did.”

“ He was one of your friends? ”

Roland declared:

“ Our best, sir; but a rabid Parisian. He never was away from the boulevard. He was head clerk in the treasurer’s office. I never saw him after I left the capital. And then we ceased to write to each other. You know when one lives far apart  
\_\_\_\_,”

The lawyer continued gravely:

“ Monsieur Maréchal is dead.”

Husband and wife made the same little gesture of sorrowful surprise, real or feigned, with which such news is received. M. Lecanu continued:

“ My colleague in Paris has just communicated to me the chief clause in his will, making your son, Monsieur Jean Roland, his sole legatee.”

So great was their astonishment that no one had a word to say.

Madame Roland was the first to master her emotion, and stammered out:

“ *Mon Dieu!* Poor Léon—our friend. *Mon Dieu, mon Dieu!* Dead! ”

Tears glistened in her eyes, those silent tears of

women that spring from the soul and overflow the cheek, and seem so mournful because they are so limpid.

Roland, however, thought less of the sadness of the loss than of the hope it held out. Still he dared not immediately ask about the clauses of the will, or the amount of the fortune; but in order to approach to the interesting question indirectly, he asked:

“What was the cause of poor Maréchal’s death?”

M. Lecanu was completely ignorant.

“I only know,” he said, “that, dying without direct heirs, he leaves all his fortune, twenty thousand francs per annum placed out at three per cent. interest, to your second son, whom he saw born and grow up, and whom he deemed deserving of this legacy. Should Monsieur Jean refuse to accept the legacy, the property will go to the orphan asylum.”

M. Roland could no longer conceal his joy, and cried:

“That’s a noble idea. If I had had no children I certainly would not have forgotten him, either—my dear friend.”

The lawyer smiled.

“I was very much gratified,” he said, “at being able to announce the matter personally. It is always a pleasure to bring people good news.”

He did not give a thought to the fact that this good news was the death of a friend, of the best friend of M. Roland, who himself had suddenly forgotten the intimacy which he had just proclaimed with such conviction.

Madame Roland and her sons alone preserved a sorrowful countenance. She continued to weep

quietly, and to wipe her eyes with her handkerchief, which she then placed to her lips to check her heavy sighs.

The doctor, in low tones, observed:

“ He was a good fellow, very kindly disposed. He often asked us to dinner, my brother and me.”

Jean, his large eyes open and sparkling, with a gesture habitual to him, clasped his beautiful beard in his right hand, and slid it through his fingers.

He opened his lips twice to utter some suitable phrase, but could think of nothing, and finally said:

“ He was very fond of me, indeed, and always kissed me when I went to see him.”

But the father's thoughts were galloping, galloping round about the legacy, just announced, and already acquired, round this money hidden behind the door, which would come in at once, to-morrow, as soon as the words “ I accept ” were uttered.

He asked:

“ There is no possible difficulty? no suit? no contest? ”

M. Lecanu was quite at his ease.

“ My colleague in Paris describes the situation as absolutely uncomplicated. We only want Monsieur Jean to accept.”

“ Good, then; and the fortune is quite clear? ”

“ Quite clear.”

“ All formalities have been gone through? ”

“ All.”

Suddenly the old jeweler felt a touch of shame—a vague, instinctive, transitory shame—at his haste in reassuring himself, and continued:

“ You understand, of course, that if I ask you all these things at once, it is to spare my son annoyances which he might not foresee. Sometimes

there are debts, embarrassments, how can I tell? And one finds one's self entangled in a labyrinth of complications. In fact, although I am not the legatee, I think of the little one before all."

In the home circle Jean was always called "the little one," although he was much taller than Pierre.

Madame Roland suddenly seemed to come out of a dream, to recall something far away, almost forgotten, which she had heard at some time and was not sure of, and she stammered out:

"Did you not say that our poor friend Maréchal had left his fortune to my little Jean?"

"Yes, Madame."

She replied simply:

"It gives me great pleasure, for it proves that he loved us."

Roland rose.

"Do you wish, dear sir, that my son should sign at once the deed of acceptance?"

"No—no, Monsieur Roland. To-morrow—to-morrow, at my office at two o'clock, if that suits you."

"Yes—yes; certainly."

Then Madame Roland, who had also risen, and was smiling after her tears, took two steps toward the lawyer, laid her hand on the back of his arm-chair, and, gazing on him with the tender look of a grateful mother, asked:

"That cup of tea, Monsieur Lecanu?"

"I will take it now, gladly, Madame, with pleasure."

The servant was called, and brought in first those dry crackers in tin boxes—those tasteless, hard English biscuits that seemed made for parrots' beaks, then went for some unbleached nap-



kins, folded in little squares—those tea napkins which are never washed in thrifty families. She came in a third time with the sugar bowl and the cups; then she went out to boil the water.

The company waited.

No one could speak: they all had too much to think of and nothing to say. Madame Roland alone made some commonplace remarks. She told about the fishing party, and praised the *Pearl* and Madame Rosémilly.

“Charming, charming woman!” repeated the lawyer.

Roland, leaning his back against the marble chimneypiece as in winter when the fire is burning, his hands in his pockets, his lips puckered up as if to whistle, could not keep still, as he was tortured with an imperious desire to give vent to his joy.

The two brothers, in similar armchairs, their legs crossed in the same fashion, sat at right and left of the central round table, looking straight before them in similar attitudes, but with different expressions.

The tea appeared at last. The lawyer took, sugared, and drank his tea, after crumbling into it a little cracker too hard to bite. Then he rose, shook hands, and left.

“The arrangement is, then,” repeated Roland, “to-morrow at your office, two o’clock.”

“That is right; to-morrow, two o’clock.”

Jean had not said a word.

After the departure of the lawyer there was again silence, till Roland, Senior, clapped his two hands on the two shoulders of his younger son, exclaiming:

“ Well, you deuced lucky dog, don’t you embrace me? ”

Jean smiled and kissed his father, saying:

“ That did not seem indispensable.”

But the father could not restrain himself for joy. He walked about, thrummed on the furniture with his clumsy fingers, pirouetted on his heels, and repeated:

“ What luck! what luck! Here’s luck indeed! ”

Pierre asked:

“ You knew Maréchal well, then, at one time? ”

His father replied:

“ By Jove! he passed all his evenings at our house. Don’t you remember that he went to the college to fetch you on holidays and often took you back again after dinner? Why, the very day Jean was born, it was he who went to get the doctor! He had breakfasted with us when your mother felt ill. We knew at once what was the matter, and off he went at a run. In his hurry he took my hat instead of his own. I remember that, because we laughed a good deal about it afterward. It is even likely he remembered this circumstance when he was dying, and, as he had no heir, said to himself: ‘ I contributed my assistance when the little fellow was born, and now I’ll leave him my fortune.’ ”

Madame Roland, buried in a deep easy-chair, seemed lost in memories. She murmured as if she were thinking aloud:

“ Ah! he was a noble friend, devoted, faithful; a rare man, as times are now.”

Jean rose. “ I am going to take a little walk,” he said.

His father was surprised and wished to detain him, for they had to talk, to make plans, to form

resolutions. But the young man was obstinate, alleging an appointment. Besides, there would be plenty of time to come to an understanding before the legacy came into his possession.

But Jean was obstinate, pretending he had an appointment. He went away, for he longed to be alone, in order to reflect. Pierre, in his turn, said he was going out, and some minutes later followed his brother.

When Roland was alone with his wife he took her in his arms, kissed her half a score of times on each cheek, and, in reply to a reproach she often had made to him, said:

"You see, my darling, that it would have been no good for me to stay longer in Paris, and work myself to death for the children, in place of coming here to recover my health, since a fortune has dropped to us out of the clouds."

She became very serious.

"It falls from the clouds for Jean," she said; "but Pierre?"

"Pierre! why, he's a doctor, he will make—money—and then his brother will do something for him."

"No. He would not take anything. Besides, the legacy is for Jean, nobody but Jean. Pierre, you see, finds himself at great disadvantage."

Poor Roland seemed perplexed.

"Then, we will leave him the most in our will."

"No. That would not be just, either," she cried.

"Ah, pshaw! What then? What do you want me to do? You are always looking out for something unpleasant. You spoil all my enjoyment. I'm off to bed. Good night. All the same, it is a stroke of good luck, right down good luck!"

He went his way, enchanted in spite of everything, and without a word of regret for the friend who died so generously.

Madame Roland returned again to dream beside the lamp which was now smoking.





## CHAPTER II

### PIERRE IS PUZZLED



AS soon as he was out of doors, Pierre turned his steps toward the Rue de Paris, Havre's principal thoroughfare—well-lighted, animated, and noisy. The rather fresh breeze coming from the sea played about his face, while he walked slowly, his cane under his arm, and his hands behind his back.

Somehow he felt ill at ease—dull, disappointed, like one who has heard bad news. This unpleasant impression had not been formulated into thought, and had he been suddenly called upon he would have been puzzled to have told the cause of this heaviness of spirit, this torpor of body. He was out of sorts—suffering from an uneasy feeling he could not explain. He had within him somewhere a sensitive spot, a scarcely perceptible moral wound that he could not place his finger upon, but which, nevertheless, annoyed, fatigued, saddened, and irritated

him; an unnamed and trifling trouble, a mere foreboding of sorrow.

Arrived at the Place du Théâtre, he felt attracted by the lights of the Café Tortoni, and slowly sauntered up to the illuminated façade; but just as he was about entering, he reflected that he might encounter friends and acquaintances—people with whom he would be compelled to converse—and a sudden repugnance for this commonplace good-fellowship of *demi-tasses* and *petits verres* took possession of him. Then, retracing his steps, he again followed the main thoroughfare in the direction of the harbor.

He asked himself, “Where shall I go?” seeking some place that would be agreeable to him in his present frame of mind. He did not find any, for he felt annoyed at being alone, and still did not wish to meet any one.

On reaching the principal quay he hesitated a moment and then turned toward the pier: he had decided in favor of solitude.

As he passed near a bench on the break-water, he stopped and sat down, tired of walking and disgusted with his proposed promenade.

Again he asked himself, “What is the matter with me this evening?” and set to work to recollect what disappointment he had met with, much as one interrogates a patient to determine the cause of his fever.

He was at once excitable and thoughtful—at one moment in a quandary, the next in full possession of his logical powers, approving or blaming his impulsive actions; but, in the end, his original nature always gained the upper hand—the man of feeling dominating the man of intellect.

He now sought to discover the reason of his temporary weakness; of the necessity he felt to keep moving without any object in view; of the desire to meet some one who would disagree with him at the same time that he had a disinclination for the society of those he might see, and a distaste for what they might say to him.

At last he put this question to himself:

“ Could it be Jean’s inheritance? ”

Yes, that might, after all, have been the cause of his discomfort. When the lawyer had brought the news, he had felt his heart beat a little faster than usual. We are certainly not always masters of ourselves, but are subject to spontaneous and persistent emotions against which we struggle in vain.

He reflected deeply on this physiological problem—the impression produced by an event on the psychic individuality, and creating within one a current of ideas and sensations, joyful or painful, the opposite of what the Thinking Being desires, demands, or considers good and wholesome—the Thinking Being, which is its superior through the cultivation of the intellect.

He tried to picture to himself the state of mind of a son who inherits a large fortune, and who is about to test many longed-for pleasures, hitherto forbidden by a father’s avarice—a father whom he nevertheless loved and pitied.

He rose and walked toward the end of the pier. He already felt better, glad to have understood—to have surprised himself, as it were, and unveiled the other personality that is within us.

“ So I was jealous of Jean,” he thought; “ certainly a rather unworthy sentiment. I am sure of it now, for the first thought that came into my head



related to his marriage with Madame Rosémilly. I don't fancy that sensible little bore, who seems made to disgust one with sound sense and goodness. Thus it is uncalled-for envy—its very essence—that which is because it is! I must beware of it.”

He had reached the signal-mast that indicates the depth of water in the harbor, and lit a match in order to read the list of ships that had been signaled outside and were waiting to come in with the next tide. Steamers were expected from Brazil, La Plata, Chili, and Japan, besides two Danish brigs, a Norwegian schooner, and a Turkish steamer. This latter announcement surprised Pierre as much as if he had read of a Swiss steamer, and caused him to conjure up the vision of a large vessel swarming with men in turbans, who sprang up the rigging in wide trousers.

“But how stupid of me,” he thought; “the Turks are a seafaring people.”

A few steps farther on he stopped to look at the bay. On his right, above Sainte Adresse, the two electric lighthouses of Cape de la Hève, like a monstrous twin Cyclops, darting across the water their continued powerful glances. The two parallel rays of light resembling the giant tails of two comets reached in a straight line of limitless length from the summit of the hill to the edge of the horizon. On the two piers, two other lights—the children of these Colossi—marked the entrance to the harbor; while yonder, across the Seine, could be seen still others, some steady and others intermittent, with brilliant flashes and dark eclipses, opening and closing like eyes—the eyes of harbors, yellow, red, green, watching over the dark sea covered with ships; living eyes of the hospitable shore, say-

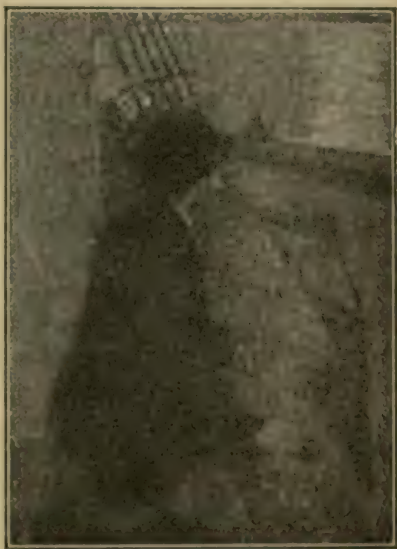


ing, by the simple mechanical movement of their lids:

“It is I; I am Trouville; I am Honfleur; I am the river of Pont Audemer.”

And overlooking all the others, so high up and so far off that it could easily be mistaken for a planet, the aerial lighthouse of Étouville, lighting the way to Rouen across the sandbanks at the mouth of the great river.

Then on the deep, boundless sea, darker than the heavens, here and there stars seemed visible. They trembled in the nocturnal mist—small, near, and distant, and also white, red, or green; generally they were motionless, but some seemed to move. They were the lights on vessels at anchor that were waiting for the rising tide, or on those still in motion that were seeking an anchorage in the harbor.



Just then the moon rose behind the town. It, too, looked like some huge, celestial beacon, placed in the heavens to guide the immeasurable flotilla of stars.

Pierre said, half aloud:

“And yet we allow ourselves to be annoyed by trifles.”

Suddenly, quite close to him, a shadow—a great, fantastic shadow glided into the wide, black opening between the two piers. Leaning over the granite parapet, he saw a fishing boat coming in without hum of voices, sounds of waves, or splashing of oars, gently gliding along, its tall brown sail filled with the breeze from the ocean.

“If one could live on that boat,” he thought, “perhaps one’s mind might be calm.”

Then, advancing a few steps farther, he saw a man seated at the end of the mole.

Was he a dreamer, a lover, a sage, a happy man, or an unhappy one? Which was he? He came nearer, curious to see the face of this solitary watcher. In a second he recognized his brother.

“What! Is it you, Jean?”

“What! Pierre? What are you doing here?”

“Getting a breath of fresh air. And you?”

Jean began to laugh.

“I am following your example.”

And Pierre sat down by the side of his brother.

“Is it not beautiful?”

“Yes.”

From the tone of his voice Pierre understood that Jean had not been looking at what was around him. He continued:

“When I come here I have a wild longing to go away with these ships—to the north, or to the south. Only to think that those lights yonder come from every quarter of the globe—from the lands with gigantic flowers and beautiful pale or copper-colored girls; the lands of humming-birds, elephants, roaring lions, negro kings; from all the lands that

furnish fairy tales for those of us who no longer believe in 'Sindbad the Sailor' or the 'Sleeping Beauty!' Wouldn't it be splendid to be able to treat one's self to a journey there? But that would take money, and a good deal of it——"

He stopped suddenly, all at once remembering that his brother now had the necessary means, and that, liberated from every care—from daily toil—free, without trammels of any kind, happy, joyous, he could go where fancy might dictate, toward the home of Swedish blondes or of Havanese brunettes.

Then one of those involuntary thoughts, common with him, so sudden, so rapid, that they could neither be foreseen, checked, nor modified, came to him as from the mind of a second, independent and powerful personality.

"Bah! he is too stupid; he will marry the little Rosémilly."

He had risen to his feet.

"I leave you to dream of your future; I feel the need of exercise."

He pressed his brother's hand, and continued in cordial tones:

"Well, little Jean, you are now wealthy. I am glad that I met you alone to-night, to tell you how pleased I am, how heartily I congratulate you, and how much I love you."

"Thanks, thanks, my good Pierre, thanks!" stammered Jean, his gentle, sympathetic nature greatly moved.

And Pierre turned back, sauntering slowly, his cane under his arm, and his hands behind his back. When he had reached the town he again asked himself what he should do, annoyed at having his walk

cut short, at having been turned from the direction of the sea by the presence of his brother.

Suddenly an idea came to him.

"I'll go drink a glass of liqueur at Père Marowsko's," and he turned back toward the Ingouville quarter.

He had known Père Marowsko in the hospitals at Paris. He was an old Pole—some said a political refugee, who had had tragic experiences in Poland, and who had come to France to carry on his business of a druggist after passing some fresh examinations. Nothing was known of his past career, although various legends had found currency among the internes and externes at the hospitals, and later among his neighbors. His reputation as a formidable conspirator, a Nihilist, a regicide, a patriot ready for any enterprise, had proved attractive to the vivid imagination of Pierre Roland, and he had become the friend of the old Pole, without, however, having obtained from him any details regarding his life. It was owing to the young physician that the old man had come to Havre to establish himself in business, relying upon the patronage that the former had promised to bring him.

In the meantime he lived economically in his little shop, selling medicines to the small dealers and working people of the neighborhood.

Pierre often dropped in to see him after dinner and have an hour's chat, for he had taken a fancy to Marowsko's calm face and occasional lapses into conversation, believing that his long silences were an indication of much profound reflection.

A single gas jet burned over a counter filled with phials. Those in the window had not yet been lighted, from motives of economy. Behind the coun-



ter, seated on one chair with his feet resting on another, a bald-headed old man, with a large, beaklike nose that, continuing the line of his forehead, gave him the solemn look of a parrot, was fast asleep with his chin resting on his breast.

At the sound of the bell he awoke, rose, and on recognizing the doctor, came forward to greet him with outstretched hands.

His black coat, spotted with stains of acids and sirups, and much too large for his small, lean frame, somewhat resembled an ancient cassock. Marowsko spoke with a strong Polish accent, that gave his weak voice a lisping, childish character, and intonations like those of a child just beginning to talk.

Pierre sat down.

“What’s the news, my dear doctor?” asked the Pole.

“Nothing; the same old story!”

“You don’t seem lively this evening.”

“No, I’m not often so.”

“Come, come! You must rouse yourself. What do you say to a glass of liqueur?”

“Thanks; I should be glad to have one.”

“Well, then, I will astonish you with a new preparation. For two months I’ve been trying to make something out of currants, from which thus far we have made nothing but sirup. I—well, I’ve found it—I’ve found it—a good liqueur, very good!”

And, beaming all over, he went to a closet, which he opened, and took out a phial. He moved about in an undecided way, with short, incomplete gestures—never fully extending his arms or his legs, or making an entire motion. His ideas were of the same order as his movements. He suggested, indi-

cated, sketched them, but never went the length of stating them.

His principal business in life seemed to be the preparation of liqueurs and sirups. "With a good sirup or a good liqueur, one can make a fortune," was a frequent remark of his; and he had invented hundreds of sweet concoctions, without being able to place a single one of them on the market. Pierre declared that Marowsko made him think of Marat.

Two small glasses were brought from the back room and placed on the preparation counter. Then the two men examined the color of the new liquid by holding it up to the light.

"Beautiful ruby!" was Pierre's verdict.

"Isn't it?"

And the old parrot-like face was wreathed in smiles.

The doctor tasted the precious cordial, held it in his mouth, pondered, tasted again, again reflected, and at last spoke:

"Good, very good, and with a decidedly original flavor. A genuine find, my dear sir."

"Yes, I am quite satisfied."

Then the old man consulted his visitor as to how the new liqueur should be named. He thought of calling it "Essence de Groseille," or, rather, "Fine Groseille," or "Grosélia," or "Groséline."

Pierre was not satisfied with either of these. Marowsko then had an idea.

"What you said just now is good, very good—'Beautiful ruby.'"

The doctor argued against the appropriateness of the title, although it was his own invention, and advised strongly in favor of "Groseillette," which Marowsko thought admirable.

Then he lapsed into silence, and remained for several minutes seated under the single gas jet without saying a word.

"Something strange happened to us this evening," said Pierre at last, almost in spite of himself. "One of my father's friends has died, and left his fortune to my brother."

The druggist did not at first seem to understand, but, after reflection, hoped that the doctor would get half. When the affair had been fully explained, he seemed surprised and vexed, and as an expression of his dissatisfaction at seeing his young friend sacrificed, he kept repeating:

"That will not look well."

Pierre, whose lassitude was again getting the upper hand of him, wanted to know what the old man meant. What evil could result from his brother's having inherited a fortune from a friend of the family? But the worthy man, circumspect in his day and generation, would not explain.

"In such a case, it is customary to divide the fortune equally between the two brothers. I tell you it will not look well."

And the doctor, out of patience, went away, returned to the paternal roof, and retired for the night.

For some time he could hear Jean softly walking up and down the adjoining room; then he fell asleep.



## CHAPTER III

### THE DEMON OF JEALOUSY



HE doctor awoke next day with a settled determination to make his fortune.

He had already come to this decision several times before, but without acting upon it. At the outset of all his attempts to enter upon a new career, the hope of becoming suddenly wealthy had buoyed him up and given him courage until he encountered the first obstacle, the first repulse, which would at once turn him in some new direction.

Cosily ensconced in his warm bed, he meditated. How many physicians had become millionaires in less than no time! All that was needed was a little skill and ability, for, in the course of his studies, he had gauged the most celebrated professors of the healing art and set them down as jackasses. Surely he was as clever



as they, if not more so! If he could manage in some way to capture the patronage of the wealthy and fashionable in Havre, he would make one hundred thousand francs a year. He ran over items of this imposing income. In the morning he would call on his patients. Taking the lowest average, he would make ten visits a day, which, at twenty francs, would give him seventy-two thousand francs a year, or more probably seventy-five thousand francs, since he would be certain to be called to see more than ten patients. In the afternoon he would devote himself to office practice; and, if he only received ten visits at ten francs, he would have thirty-six thousand francs at the end of the year. Thus he would have an income of one hundred and twenty thousand francs. Former patrons and friends whom he would call on for ten francs a visit, and for whom he would prescribe at his office for five francs, might slightly diminish this total; but this again would be made up by consultations with other physicians and the numerous perquisites of the profession.

Nothing easier than to reach this point by dint of skilful if indirect advertising—the insertion of paragraphs in the *Figaro* calling attention to the fact that the whole body of Paris savants had their eyes fixed on him, and were deeply interested in the surprising cures performed by the young and modest physician of Havre. He would be richer than his brother—richer and celebrated—and satisfied with himself, for he would be the architect of his own fortune, and he would be generous to his aged parents, who would be justly proud of his renown. He would not marry, not caring to embarrass himself with one exacting woman; but he would

have intimate friends among the prettiest of his women patrons.

By this time he felt so sure of success that he sprang out of bed as if intent on at once grasping it, and dressed himself in order to look through the town for a suite of rooms that would suit him.

Then, rambling about the streets, he thought how insignificant are the trifles that sometimes affect our most important actions. For three weeks he had been hesitating about taking some decided step, when this course suddenly occurs to him—doubtless as a consequence of his brother's having received a legacy.

He stopped before doors beside which were cards advertising "beautiful" or "luxurious" apartments, or "apartments" pure and simple, the latter only inspiring his contempt. Then he inspected several with a haughty air, measured the height of ceilings, sketched on his memorandum book the plan of the apartment, showing the communicating doors and those opening into the hall, and announced that he was a physician who received many visits. The staircase must be large and well kept; he could not go higher up than one flight.

After taking seven or eight addresses and scribbling down a mass of information, he returned to breakfast a quarter of an hour late.

In the vestibule he heard the rattling of dishes. Could they have begun without him? Why? Meals were never very punctual in that household. He felt hurt and dissatisfied, as he was a little sensitive. As soon as he entered the room his father said to him:

"Come. Pierre, make haste! You know we are

going to the lawyer's at two. This is no day for loitering."

The doctor sat down without replying, after having kissed his mother and pressed the hands of his father and brother. He then took from the dish in the center of the table the cutlet that had been left for him. It was cold and dry. It was also probably the poorest. He thought that it might have been left in the oven until his arrival, and that they should not have so completely forgotten their other son—the eldest. The conversation that had been interrupted by his entrance was continued.

"As for me," said Madame Roland to Jean, "this is what I should do, and at once. I should take showy apartments—something striking; I would go into society, buy a horse, and select one or two interesting cases to plead, thus securing a foothold in the higher court. I would seek to be a kind of very special amateur advocate. Thank Heaven! you are beyond the reach of want, and if you follow a profession, it will be in order not to lose the fruits of your studies, and because no man should remain idle."

Père Roland, who was peeling a pear, said:

"*Cristi!* In your place I should buy a fine craft—a cutter, built on the model of our pilot boats—and should sail as far as Senegal."

Pierre, in his turn, gave an opinion. It was to the effect that a man's intellectual or moral worth did not depend on his fortune. To those of only moderate intelligence money was too often the cause of their degradation, while in the hands of the strong it was a powerful lever. The latter, however, were rare. If Jean was really a man above the average, he would now be able to give proof of



it, since he found himself beyond the reach of want. But he would have to work a hundred times harder than he would have been called upon to do under ordinary circumstances. It was not a question of pleading for, or against, the widow and orphan, and of pocketing a certain number of crowns for a case won, or lost; but of becoming an eminent jurist—a great legal light!

And he added in conclusion:

“ If I had money, I should dissect bodies! ”

Père Roland shrugged his shoulders:

“ Tra, la, la! The wisest thing to do is to take life easy. We are not beasts of burden, but men. When one is born to poverty, one must work—and, so much the worse, one works; but when one has an income, one would be a fool to kill himself with work.”

“ Our inclinations are not the same,” replied Pierre with dignity. “ As for me, all that I respect in the world is knowledge and intellect—everything else is contemptible.”

As Madame Roland always endeavored to break the force of the collisions that were constantly occurring between father and son, on the present occasion she turned the drift of the conversation by referring to a murder that had been committed the week previous at Bolbec-Hointot. The attention of the family was soon occupied by the details of the tragedy, their atrocity, and the attractive mystery inseparable from even vulgar, scandalous, and loathsome crimes—a mystery that exercises a strange and fascinating power over the imagination.

Père Roland, however, frequently consulted his watch.



"Come," he said, "it is time to be going."

"It is not one yet," was Pierre's sarcastic comment. "As there is abundance of time, it was scarcely worth while to give me a cold cutlet to eat."

"Are you coming to the lawyer's with us?" asked his mother.

"What should I do there? My presence is entirely unnecessary."

Jean remained as silent as if he were in no way interested in the matter. When the Bolbec murder was being discussed, he had laid down certain legal principles, and made certain points regarding crimes and criminals. Now he had relapsed into silence; but the brilliancy of his eyes, his red cheeks, and even his glossy beard seemed to proclaim his happiness.

After the family had set out, Pierre, finding himself again alone, continued his morning's search for furnished apartments. After two or three hours of ascending and descending stairs, he finally discovered, on the Boulevard François I, something really desirable—a large mezzanine apartment with doors opening on two different streets, two reception rooms, a corridor inclosed in glass where patients, while waiting, might stroll about among the flowers, and a charming circular dining room with windows looking out on the sea.

Just as he was about to take it, the rent—three thousand francs—proved a stumbling-block, as the first quarter must be paid in advance, and he had not even a sou of his own.

The small fortune that his father had been able to put aside did not yield quite eight thousand francs a year, and Pierre had often reproached

himself for having caused his parents difficulties through his indecision in choice of a profession, his invariably abandoned experiments, and his continual taking up of new studies. He therefore let the matter stand, promising a decision in two days. Meantime it occurred to him that he might ask his brother to advance the money for the first three or even six months—fifteen hundred francs—as soon as the latter should come into possession of his legacy.

“That would only be a few months’ loan at the longest,” he thought. “I should probably repay it even before the end of the year. Nothing would be more natural, and he would be glad to be able to accommodate me.”

As it was not yet four o’clock, and he had nothing, absolutely nothing, to do, he sauntered into the Public Gardens and sat down. There he remained on his bench, not even giving himself the trouble to think, his eyes fixed on the ground, a prey to a sense of lassitude that was fast developing into real discomfort.

Still, he had passed all the preceding days in this way since his return to the paternal roof, without suffering as he was now doing from the void in his life and from inaction. How had he been able to pass the hours from the time he rose until bedtime?

He had lounged on the pier when the tide came in, lounged on the streets, lounged in the cafés, lounged at Marowsko’s, lounged everywhere. And now this kind of life, that had seemed tolerable enough up to the present time, had become hateful to him. If he had had money he would have taken a carriage and gone for a long drive in the country along roads shaded by beeches and oaks; but he was

forced to count the price of a glass of beer or a postage stamp, and such extravagance was not within his means. It suddenly occurred to him how hard it was, when a man is past thirty, to be obliged from time to time blushing to ask his mother for a louis, and he muttered to himself as he scratched the gravel with his cane:

“*Crist!* if I only had money.”

And the thought of his brother's legacy again came to him like the sting of a wasp; but he dismissed it impatiently, not wishing to surrender himself to envy.

Fair, light-haired children were playing around him in the dust of the paths, and carefully constructing imposing mountains of sand, only to tumble them down with a kick as soon as built.

This was for Pierre one of those depressing days when one looks into all the corners of one's mind and shakes out all its creases.

“Our own tasks,” he reflected, “resemble the work of these youngsters.” Then he asked himself whether it were not the wisest course in life to beget two or three of these little, useless beings, and watch them grow up with a pleased curiosity. And the desire to marry came to him. One would at least hear some one moving about in the hours of trouble and uncertainty; it is something to have woman's sympathy when one is suffering.

He began to think about women. He knew them but slightly, his flirtations in the Latin Quarter having seldom lasted more than a fortnight, being broken off when the month's allowance had been exhausted, and continued or replaced by a new one when the next remittance arrived. There must, however, be kind creatures. Was not his mother



the good sense and the attraction of his father's fireside? How he would like to meet a woman—a real woman!

He rose suddenly with a resolution to call on Madame Rosémilly. Then he sat down again as suddenly. She was displeasing to him. Why? She was too vulgarly practical; besides, did she not appear to prefer Jean? Without admitting it in so many words, this preference counted for much in his low estimate of the widow's intelligence; for, although he loved his brother, he could not help considering him rather commonplace intellectually, and as inferior to himself.

He did not intend, however, to remain where he was until nightfall, and, as on the previous evening, he anxiously asked himself, "What shall I do?"

He now felt within him the necessity of being petted, embraced, and consoled. But consoled for what? He could not have told; but he was passing through one of those periods of weakness and lassitude in which the presence of a woman, the caresses of a woman, the touch of a hand, a glance from eyes blue or black, seem suddenly indispensable to our hearts.

And the recollection came to him of a waitress in a wine shop whom he had one evening taken home, and whom he had seen again from time to time.

He again rose to go and drink a "bock" with this girl. What should he say to her? What would she say to him? Nothing, no doubt; but what did it matter? He would hold her hand a moment. She seemed to have taken a fancy to him. Why, then, did he not see her oftener?



He found her taking a nap on a chair in the almost deserted wine shop. Three customers were smoking their pipes, with their elbows on the oak tables; the cashier was reading a novel; while the proprietor, in his shirt sleeves, was asleep.

As soon as she saw him the girl rose quickly and came forward, saying:

“ Good day; how are you? ”

“ All right; and you? ”

“ Oh! very well. What a stranger you are! ”

“ Yes, I have but little time to myself; you know I’m a physician.”

“ Well, why didn’t you tell me so before? If I had only known it, I would have consulted you when I was ailing last week. What will you take? ”

“ A beer; and you? ”

“ I’ll have one, too, as you pay for it.”

She brought the glasses, and, seated opposite each other, they chatted. Every now and then she would take his hand with the easy familiarity of her class, and looking at him with tender glances, she said:

“ Why don’t you come oftener? I like you ever so much, you know.”

But he had already had enough of her, and she appeared in his eyes what she really was—stupid, common, and vulgar.

“ Women,” he said to himself, “ should come to us only in dreams, or surrounded by the aureole of luxury, that idealizes what is commonplace.”

“ You passed here the other morning with a handsome light-haired gentleman with a long beard,” she remarked; “ was it your brother? ”

“ Yes, it was my brother.”

“ He is awfully good-looking.”

“ You think so? ”

“ Certainly; and he looks as if he lived well.”

What uncontrollable impulse suddenly urged Pierre to tell this wine-shop waitress of Jean's legacy? Why did the story, that he would have forced back had he been alone, come to his lips at that instant, and why did he allow it to make its way out from between his lips as if he felt compelled to relieve his heart, swollen with bitterness, before some one?

“ He's a lucky fellow, my brother,” he said as he crossed his legs; “ he's just fallen heir to an income of twenty thousand francs.”

She opened wide her blue, covetous eyes.

“ And who left it to him? His grandmother, or his aunt? ”

“ No, an old friend of my parents.”

“ Only a friend? Impossible. And you didn't get anything? ”

“ No; I scarcely knew him.”

She thought a moment, and then, with a peculiar smile, said:

“ Well, your brother is fortunate in having friends like that. No wonder he doesn't look at all like you.”

His first impulse was to slap her face, without exactly knowing why; but he only asked, in a constrained way:

“ What do you mean? ”

“ Me?—oh, nothing,” she replied, with affected ingenuousness; “ only he's luckier than you.”

He threw twenty sous on the table, and went out.

Then he kept repeating the phrase: “ No wonder he doesn't look at all like you.” What was she thinking of? What hidden meaning lay concealed

in these words? They were certainly inspired by malice and spitefulness. They were insulting. Yes, the girl must have thought that Jean was Maréchal's son.

The emotion that this slur on his mother's good name aroused in him was so violent that he stopped and looked about for some place to sit down.

He saw another café opposite, went in, took a chair, and ordered another "bock."

He felt his heart beat; cold chills ran over him. Suddenly he remembered what Marowsko had said the day before: "It will not look well." Had the same thought—the same suspicion—occurred to him and to this waitress?

Leaning over his beer glass, he watched the white foam rise and melt, while he asked himself:

"Can people really believe a thing like that?"

The reasons that gave rise to this odious hypothesis in the minds of others now appeared to him, in their order, clear, evident, exasperating. That an old bachelor without heirs should leave his fortune to the two children of a friend—nothing seemed simpler or more natural; but when he gave the whole of it to one only, no doubt the world would at first be surprised, then gossip, and finally smile. Why had he not foreseen it? Why had his father not had an inkling of it? Why had his mother not suspected it? No, they were too happy over this unexpected windfall; such a thought would not occur to them. Besides, how could these worthy people entertain such an ignoble suspicion?

But the public, the neighbors, the tradesmen, all who knew them—would they not repeat this odious slander, laugh and jest over it, ridiculing his father, and despising his mother?



And the remark made by the wine-shop girl, that Jean was light and he dark, that they did not resemble each other either in face, gait, figure, or mind, would likewise occur to every one. When they referred in future to Roland's son, people would ask: "Which, the real or the false one?"

He got up, having decided that his brother must be warned—put on his guard against the terrible danger that threatened their mother's honor. But what would Jean do? The simplest way out of the difficulty would be to refuse the legacy, which would then go to the poor, and to say to friends and acquaintances who had heard of the will that the latter contained objectionable clauses and conditions, that would have made Jean not an heir, but a trustee.

As he entered the house he decided that he ought to see his brother alone, so as not to have to speak on such a subject before his parents.

As he opened the door he heard the sound of voices and laughter in the salon, and on entering that apartment he discovered that his father had brought back with them Madame Rosémilly and Captain Beausire to dinner in honor of the joyful occasion.

Vermouth and absinthe were handed round to excite an appetite, and the party were already in the best of spirits. Captain Beausire was a little roly-poly man, whose angles had been rounded off by much rolling about on the sea, and whose ideas were as smooth as his person—like pebbles on the beach—who laughed heartily and seemed to consider that there was good in everything in life.

He clinked glasses with Père Roland, while Jean filled those of the ladies a second time.



Madame Rosémilly refused, when Captain Beausire, who had known her husband, exclaimed:

“Come, come, madame, *bis repetita placent*, as we say in *patois*, which signifies: ‘Two vermouths can’t do *one* any harm.’ Now as for me, since I no longer follow the sea, I give myself, every day before dinner, two or three of those artificial ‘rolls.’ I supplement them with a little ‘pitching’ after the coffee, which makes the sea rise during the rest of the evening. However, I never go the length of raising a ‘tempest,’ never, never, never, for I fear ‘shipwreck.’”

Roland, whose passion for the sea was encouraged by the old sailor, laughed heartily, his face already glowing, and his eye unsteady from the absinthe. He had a large stomach—an abdomen in which all the rest of his body appeared to have been absorbed—one of those soft, yielding corporations with which men who sit a great deal are afflicted, and who seem to have neither thighs, chest, arms, nor neck—all being apparently heaped up together on the seat of their chair.

Beausire, on the contrary, although short and stout, was as well filled out as an egg and as hard as a ball.

Madame Roland had not yet finished her first glass; and, rosy with happiness, her eyes shining, she was lost in the contemplation of her son Jean.

His cup of enjoyment seemed at length to be full. The affair was concluded, the papers had been signed, and now he had an income of twenty thousand francs. By the way in which he laughed, from his speaking with fuller, more sonorous tones than was his wont, from his more decided manner and his greater degree of assurance, it was evident that

he already had acquired the self-poise that money brings.

Dinner was announced, and as old Roland was about to offer his arm to Madame Rosémilly, his wife interposed:

“ No, no, father, to-day everything is for Jean.”

The table groaned under unaccustomed plenty. Jean took his father's seat, and before his plate stood a huge bouquet with silk favors—such as only grace very ceremonious occasions—which rose like a flag-decorated dome. At its sides were four glass dishes, one containing a pyramid of superb peaches; the second, an immense cake filled with whipped cream, and covered with bells made of frosting—a regular cathedral; the third, slices of pineapples in a white sirup; and the fourth—unheard-of extravagance—black grapes brought from the tropics.

“ *Bigre!* ” said Pierre, seating himself. “ We seem to be celebrating the occasion of Jean le Riche! ”

After the soup they drank Madeira, and everybody began to talk at once. Beausire told of a dinner that he had eaten in Santo Domingo, at the table of a negro general. Père Roland listened to him, but endeavored to get in edgeways a story of his own about a certain repast given by one of his friends at Meudon, as a consequence of having partaken of which every guest had to pay the penalty of a fortnight's illness. Madame Rosémilly, Jean, and his mother talked over a proposed excursion to Saint Jouin, and a breakfast there, from which they promised themselves much unalloyed pleasure; while Pierre bitterly regretted not having dined alone, at a cheap seaside restaurant, where he would

have escaped all the noise, laughter, and joyful manifestations that were unnerving him.

He reflected as to how he should manage to communicate his fears to his brother, and to induce him to give up the fortune that he had already accepted, that he was even now enjoying, and that was exercising its intoxicating influence upon him. It would no doubt be hard for him, but the necessity was there; he could not hesitate since their mother's good name was at stake.

The appearance of an enormous trout started Roland off into a series of tales about fishing. Beau-sire matched them with wonderful adventures at Gaboon, at Sainte Marie, in Madagascar, and, particularly, on the coasts of China and Japan, where, he declared, the fish had faces as comical as those of the inhabitants. And he described them, their great, golden eyes, their blue or red bellies, their queer fins, like fans, their crescent-shaped tails—so vividly and with so much humor that his hearers laughed until tears stood in their eyes.

Pierre alone seemed incredulous, and muttered to himself:

“No wonder that the Normans are called the Gascons of the North!”

After the fish came a *vol-au-vent*, then a roast chicken, a salad, kidney beans, and a *pâté* of Pithiviers larks. Madame de Rosémilly's maid assisted in waiting on the table, and the general good humor sensibly increased with each successive glass of wine. When the cork of the first bottle of champagne popped, Père Roland, greatly excited, and imitating the sound with his lips, exclaimed:

“I like that better than the sound of a pistol.”



Pierre, more and more annoyed, replied with a sneer:

“ Still, it may be more dangerous for you.”

Roland, who was about to drink, replaced his full glass on the table, and asked:

“ How so? ”

For some time past he had been complaining of his health—of torpor, giddiness, and certain constant and inexplicable unpleasant sensations. The doctor replied:

“ Because the pistol ball might miss you; but the wine goes straight into your stomach.”

“ And then? ”

“ And then it burns in the stomach, disorganizes the nervous system, renders the circulation sluggish, and paves the way for apoplexy, with which all men of your temperament are threatened.”

The fumes of increasing intoxication that had gradually been overpowering the ex-jeweler were suddenly dispersed as by a gust of wind, and he looked at his son with anxious, restless eyes, endeavoring to make out whether he was not jesting.

“ Oh, these plaguey doctors! ” exclaimed Beausire; “ they’re all just alike. You mustn’t eat, you mustn’t drink, or make love, or dance round dances! It is all detrimental to your precious health. Well, I’ve done everything they forbid in all parts of the world, wherever I could, and as often as I could, and I don’t see that I’m any the worse for it.”

“ In the first place, Captain,” replied Pierre, with a touch of sarcasm in his voice, “ you’re stronger than my father; and, besides, all good livers talk just as you do until the day when—and they never return to say to the prudent medi-



cal adviser: 'You were right, doctor.' When I see my father do precisely what he ought not to do, what is most dangerous for him to do, it is only natural that I should warn him. A pretty son I should be if I did not."

"Come, Pierre," interrupted Madame Roland, greatly annoyed, "what is the matter with you? It can't do him any harm for once. Think what an occasion it is for him—for us all! You will spoil his pleasure and ours, too. You are very ill-natured."

"Let him do as he likes," Pierre muttered to himself, shrugging his shoulders; "I have warned him."

But Père Roland did not drink. He looked at his glass full of clear, sparkling wine, whose intoxicating essence was coming to the surface in minute bubbles that were pressing eagerly, rapidly upward, and bursting as they reached the air. He looked at it with the distrust of the fox that has found a dead fowl, but suspects a trap.

"You think that would do me much harm?" he asked hesitatingly.

Pierre was touched with a feeling of compunction, and upbraided himself for having caused others to suffer through his ill humor.

"No, go ahead," he said, "you may drink this time; but don't abuse the privilege, and don't make a practice of it."

Then Père Roland raised his glass, but without having quite decided whether he would drink or not. He again looked at it in a woe-begone fashion, at once desirous and fearful; then he smelt it, tasted it, sipped it, keeping the wine in his mouth, but all the time the prey of many an anxious thought, dis-

tracted by weakness and the desire to gratify his palate, and filled with regret as soon as he had drained the last drop.

All at once Pierre met the eye of Madame Rosémilly. It was fixed on him—clear, blue, penetrating, and stern. He at once divined the meaning of the look—the irritation that had possessed the simple-minded, straightforward little woman, for her glance said to him:

“ You are envious ; that is disgraceful.”

He bent down his head, and went on eating. But he was not hungry, and nothing pleased him. He was tormented by a desire to go away from these people, so that he would no longer hear them talking, jesting, and laughing.

Meantime Père Roland, the fumes of the wine having again gone to his head, had already forgotten his son's advice, and was looking askance at a bottle of champagne, still nearly full, that had been left by the side of his plate. He dared not touch it, for fear of receiving another admonition, and he was therefore meditating by what means he could gain possession of it without attracting Pierre's attention. Finally he decided in favor of the most natural course possible. He took the bottle carelessly, and, holding it at the bottom, reached across the table, and first filled the doctor's glass, which happened to be empty ; then he filled up the other glasses round the table, and when he came back to his own, he began talking very loud, so that if any one noticed him filling his glass they would have declared that it had been done inadvertently. However, no one seemed to notice him.

Pierre, without thinking of what he was doing, drank a good deal. Nervous and annoyed, he fre-

quently, but unconsciously, raised his glass with its clear, effervescing liquid to his lips.

Gradually a pleasant warmth spread over his body and diffused itself throughout his entire being, like a tepid, gracious wave bringing with it joy and comfort. He already felt better, less impatient, less discontented; even his resolution to speak to his brother that very evening was weakened—not that he had gone so far as to think of abandoning his intention, but he was not anxious to disturb his newly found serenity.

At last Beausire rose to propose a toast. Having bowed all around, he said:

“Very gracious ladies and gentlemen: We have met to celebrate a happy event in the life of one of our friends. It was formerly said that Fortune was blind: I believe that she was only short-sighted, or malicious, and that she has just purchased an excellent pair of marine glasses, which have enabled her to make out in the port of Havre the son of our gallant comrade Roland, captain of the *Pearl*.”

“Bravos” were uttered by all lips, reënforced by much clapping of hands, and Père Roland was happy.

After coughing, for he felt husky, and his tongue was somewhat unwieldy, he stammered out these words:

“Thank you, Captain; thanks for myself and for my son. I shall never forget your conduct on the present occasion. May you always be happy.”

His eyes being filled with tears that ran down his nose, he sat down, not thinking of anything more to say.

Jean, who was laughing, took the floor:



"It is I who should thank the devoted, the dear" (here he looked at Madame Rosémilly) "friends who have to-day given me this touching proof of their affection. But it is not by words that I can testify my gratitude. I shall prove it to-morrow, every instant of my life—always; for our friendship is not of the kind that passes lightly away."

"Well said, my child!" murmured his mother, much affected; but Beausire exclaimed:

"Come, Madame Rosémilly, say something in behalf of the ladies."

She raised her glass, and in a gentle voice, a little tinged with sadness, she said:

"I drink to the blessed memory of Monsieur Maréchal."

There was a pause for a few seconds—a calm, as for contemplation after a prayer. Then Beausire, who was handy at compliments, remarked:

"It takes the women to think of those little refinements of sentiment."

Then, turning to Père Roland, he said:

"But, after all, who was this Maréchal? You were very intimate with him, were you not?"

The old man, somewhat maudlin in his cups, began to shed tears, and in disjointed sentences explained:

"A brother—you know—one of those we never meet any more—we were never separated—he dined with us every evening—and he paid for our seats at the theater—I can't say any more than that—than that—than that. A friend—a true—true—wasn't he, Louise?"

"Yes, a faithful friend," said his wife simply.

Pierre looked at his father and mother, but, as



the conversation turned on other subjects, he began to drink again.

He had little recollection of what occurred after that, except that they drank coffee and liqueur and laughed and joked. He retired toward midnight, his mind confused and his head heavy, and slept like a log until nine the next morning.



## CHAPTER IV

### A SUDDEN QUESTION



LUMBER, steeped in champagne and chartreuse, no doubt soothed and calmed him, for he awoke in a very kindly disposition of mind. As he dressed himself, he examined, weighed, and summed up the emotions of the preceding evening, and sought to disentangle from them, clearly and completely, the real secret motives, the personal as well as the external motives.

It was, in fact, quite possible that the girl in the wine shop had conceived a vile idea, on learning that only one of the sons of Roland had received a

legacy from an unknown person. Have not such creatures always such suspicions, without the shadow of a motive, about every honest woman? Do they not, whenever they talk, insult, calumniate, defame, every woman whom they imagine to be beyond reproach? Whenever an unimpeachable character is mentioned in their presence, they become annoyed as if they were being slandered, and cry, "Ah, yes, indeed, I know your married women—models of propriety. They have more intrigues than we, only they conceal them because they are hypocrites. Oh, yes; models of propriety!"

Under any other circumstances, he certainly would not have listened to, nor even supposed possible, such insinuations against his poor mother, so good, so simple, so worthy. But his soul was troubled by the leaven of jealousy fermenting in him. And in his over-excited state, on the watch, in spite of himself, for anything which might be of detriment to his brother, he had perhaps attributed to this waitress odious meanings of which she was innocent. It was possible that his imagination alone, the imagination which he did not control, and which incessantly outstripped his will, was straying and roaming untrammelled in the infinite universe of ideas, and bringing thence shameful, unavowable thoughts, which he hid away in the depths of his soul, as in some unsounded abyss, like something stolen. It might be that his imagination alone created and invented this horrible doubt. His heart assuredly, his own heart, had its own secrets; and this wounded heart perhaps had found in this abominable doubt a means of depriving his brother of the inheritance that he envied. He suspected himself, at present; and, as devotees interrogate their

conscience, he questioned all the mysteries of his thoughts.

Certainly Madame Rosémilly, limited as was her intelligence, had the tact, the keen scent, the subtle perception of women. But this idea had never occurred to her, for she drank, in perfect good faith, to the blessed memory of Monsieur Maréchal. She would not have done so if the slightest suspicion had touched her. Now he no longer had any doubts; his involuntary displeasure at the fortune that had fallen to his brother, and also, assuredly, his religious love for his mother, had intensified his scruples—pious and honorable scruples indeed, but exaggerated.

On arriving at this conclusion, he had a feeling of satisfaction as at the accomplishment of a good action, and he resolved to be amiable to all the world, beginning with his father, whose whims, stupid assertions, vulgar notions, and too apparent mediocrity incessantly irritated him.

He did not come in late for breakfast, and he amused all the family with his wit and good humor.

His mother, delighted, said to him:

“ Dear Pierre, you do not know how witty and amusing you can be when you please.”

And he talked on, making epigrams, and exciting their mirth by ingenious caricatures of their friends. Beausire was his butt, and at times Madame Rosémilly; but he treated her in a discreet fashion, not too ill-naturedly. And he thought as he looked at his brother: “ Why don’t you stand up for her, stupid? It is all very well, your being rich, but I can cut you out whenever I choose.”

Over the coffee he said to his father:

“ Are you going to use the *Pearl* to-day? ”



“ No, my boy.”

“ Can I take her and Jean Bart? ”

“ Oh, yes; whenever you like.”

He bought a good cigar at the first tobacconist's he came to, and, with a joyous air, went down to the harbor.

He looked at the clear, luminous sky of delicate blue, freshened by the sea breeze.

Papagris, the sailor, called commonly Jean Bart, was asleep at the bottom of the boat, which it was his duty to have ready for sailing every day at noon, when there was no fishing party in the morning.

“ Only ourselves, skipper,” cried Pierre, as he descended the iron ladder from the quay and leaped into the boat.

“ How is the wind? ” he asked.

“ Still from the north, Master Pierre. We'll have a good breeze in the offing.”

He hoisted the foresail, and raised the anchor, and the boat, unmoored, began to glide gently toward the pier on the calm water of the harbor. The slight land breeze struck the top of the sail so gently as to be imperceptible, and the *Pearl* seemed endowed with a life of its own—the life of vessels—urged on by a mysterious and hidden force in itself. Pierre took the tiller, and, cigar in mouth, his legs stretched out on the seat, his eyes half closed in the blinding rays of the sun, watched, as they passed them, the huge tarred timbers of the breakwater.

When they reached the open sea, at the extreme end of the north pier, the freshening breeze, as it passed across the doctor's face and hands, seemed like a chilly kiss. He drew a long breath and inflated his lungs, as if drinking it in. It filled the

brown sail that bellied out, gave the *Pearl* a list to leeward, and enlivened her speed.

Jean Bart quickly hoisted the jib, and its triangle, filled with the wind, looked like a wing. Then, taking two strides aft, he threw loose the driver which was lashed to its mast.

The boat abruptly keeled over, and, as she flew on at full speed, there was a gentle swishing, bubbling sound as she cut through the water.

The stem cut the sea like the share of a plow run wild, and the waves it raised, in white curves of foam, curled up, and fell back just as the heavy brown earth falls back from the furrow.

Every wave they encountered—and they were short and close together—gave the *Pearl* a shock from the jibboom to the rudder, which quivered in Pierre's hands; and when the wind blew stronger for some seconds the water skimmed the gunwale as if it would overflow the boat. A steam collier from Liverpool was at anchor, waiting for the tide; they passed under her stern, and then visited the ships in the roadstead, one after the other, and then stood a little farther out to admire the coast.

For three hours Pierre, in calm and motionless content, went hither and thither on the rippling water, steering as though it were some winged creature, swift and obedient, this thing of wood and canvas that came and went at his caprice, at a pressure of his hand.

He was plunged in revery—such revery as comes to one on horseback or on a ship's deck. He thought of his future, which was to be prosperous, and of the pleasure of a life of intelligence. To-morrow he would ask his brother to lend him, for three months, fifteen hundred francs, so that he could

move at once into the pretty suite of rooms in the Boulevard François I.

The sailor said, all at once:

“Here’s the fog, Master Pierre. Better put about.”

He raised his eyes, and saw in the north an extensive gray light shadow that obscured the sky, and covered the sea, and was advancing toward them like a cloud fallen from the sky.

He veered round, and, with the wind astern, directed his course to the jetty, followed by the driving fog, which gained on them. As it reached the *Pearl*, and enveloped it in its intangible density, a cold chill ran through Pierre’s limbs; and a smoky, musty odor, the strange odor of sea fog, made him close his mouth that he might not swallow this damp and icy mist. When the boat reached its anchorage in the dock, the whole town was already buried in the fine vapor, which, without falling, wetted one like rain, and spread over the houses and streets like a river overflowing.

Pierre, with his hands and feet chilled, hurried home, and flung himself on his bed to sleep till dinner time. When he entered the dining room, his mother was saying to Jean:

“The corridor will be charming. We will put some flowers there. You’ll see. I will take on myself to attend to them and renew them. When you give a party, it will be a fairy scene.”

“What are you talking about?” the doctor asked.

“A delightful suite of rooms I have just rented for your brother—a real treasure on the mezzanine floor overlooking two streets. It contains two reception rooms, a glass corridor, and a little round

dining room, perfectly lovely for a rich bachelor."

Pierre grew pale. His heart was filled with anger.

"Where is it?" he said.

"Boulevard François I."

He doubted no longer, and took his seat, so exasperated that he longed to cry out, "This is too much! Is he to have everything?"

His mother, radiant with pleasure, continued:

"And, fancy, I got it for two thousand eight hundred francs. They asked three thousand, but I obtained a reduction of two hundred francs by taking a lease for three, six, or nine years. Your brother will be admirably settled there. An elegant apartment is all that is necessary to make a lawyer's fortune. It attracts clients, charms and retains them; it inspires them with respect, and lets them understand that a man living in such style must be well paid for his words."

She was silent a few seconds, and resumed:

"We must find something like it for you, but more modest, as you have nothing—still very nice, all the same."

Pierre replied in an indignant tone: "For me! It will be by work and science that I shall succeed."

His mother persisted:

"Yes, but I assure you a pretty apartment will be a great help, all the same."

About the middle of the meal, he asked abruptly:

"How did you make the acquaintance of this Maréchal?"

Monsieur Roland raised his head, and tried to refresh his memory.

"Wait, I do not remember very well. It is so



long ago. Oh, yes, I know! Your mother made his acquaintance in the shop—was not that the way, Louise? He came to order something, and often returned. We knew him as a customer before knowing him as a friend.”

Pierre, who was eating French beans, and sticking the point of his fork into them one after the other, as if he were spitting them, rejoined:

“At what time did you make his acquaintance?”

Roland again tried to recollect, but, recalling nothing, appealed to his wife’s memory:

“What year was it, Louise? You cannot have forgotten, as you have so good a memory. Let’s see. Was it in ’fifty-five or ’fifty-six? Just think; you must know better than I do.”

She reflected for some time; then, with a steady and tranquil voice, replied:

“It was in ’fifty-eight. Pierre was then three years old. I am certain I make no mistake, for it was the year when the child had the scarlatina, and Maréchal, whom we then knew but little, was of great assistance to us.”

Roland exclaimed:

“True, true, he was wonderfully kind. When your mother was worn out with fatigue, and I was busy in the shop, he went to the druggist’s to bring the medicines. He had, indeed, a noble heart. And when you were well again, you cannot imagine how happy he was, and how he kissed you. It was from that time that we became great friends.”

Then this thought entered Pierre’s mind, like a bullet that tears and wounds: “Since he knew me first, was so devoted to me, loved and kissed me so fondly; since I was the cause of the great intimacy

with my parents—why did he leave all his fortune to my brother, and nothing to me? ”

He asked no more questions, and remained moody rather than thoughtful, nursing a new, as yet undefined disquiet, the secret germ of a new calamity.

He left the house early, and began again to roam the streets. They were buried in the fog, which rendered the night oppressive, opaque, and sickening. It might have been called a pestilential vapor bearing down on the earth. It could be seen streaming past the gas lights, which it seemed momentarily to extinguish. The street pavements became slippery, as from an icy coating, and all evil odors seemed to come out of the houses—putrid odors from cellars, from gutters, from spouts, from filthy kitchens—and blend with the odor of the flying mist.

Pierre, with his shoulders to his ears and his hands in his pockets, not wishing to remain longer out in the cold, went to call on Marowsko.

The old druggist was still sleeping under the gas-light of his store. When he recognized Pierre, whom he loved with the attachment of a faithful dog, he shook off his torpor, went to look for his glasses, and brought out his new liqueur.

“ Well,” asked the doctor, “ how are you coming on with your liqueur? ”

The Pole explained that four of the principal cafés of the town had consented to give it a trial, and how the *Phare de la Côte* and the *Sémaphore Havrais* would write it up in exchange for some pharmaceutical products presented to the editors.

After a long silence, Marowsko asked if Jean was really in possession of his fortune, and put

two or three further vague questions on the same subject. His sullen devotion to Pierre revolted against this preference. Pierre believed he could follow his thoughts; he divined, understood, read them in his averted eyes, in the hesitating tone of his voice, in the phrases which rose to his lips, but which he did not utter, and which he would not utter—he so discreet, so timid, so cautious.

He no longer doubted that the old man was thinking: "You ought not to have let him accept this legacy, which will cause evil reports about your mother." Perhaps he even believed that Jean was Maréchal's son. Certainly he believed it. How could he help believing it, as it must appear so probable, so natural, so evident? Had not he himself, Pierre, her son, been struggling for three days with all his force, all the subtle arguments of his heart, to deceive his reason? Was he not still struggling against this terrible suspicion?

And once again the necessity of being alone in order to think, to discuss with himself, to face boldly, without scruples or feebleness, this theory so possible, and yet so monstrous, dominated him so forcibly that he rose without even tasting the liqueur, shook the astonished druggist by the hand, and plunged into the fog of the streets.

He said to himself: "Why did this man Maréchal leave all his fortune to Jean?"

It was now no longer jealousy that made him ask this; it was no longer that rather mean and natural envy which he knew was hid in his bosom, and which he had fought against for the last three days; it was the dread of something horrible—the dread of believing, himself, that Jean, his brother, was the son of that man!



No, he did not believe it, he could not even put to himself so criminal a question. This suspicion, however slight, however improbable, must be rejected by him, utterly and forever. He must have light and certainty, he must have complete assurance in his heart, for his mother was all he loved in the world.

And as he wandered alone in the night, he would submit his memory and his reason to a minute examination, through which the startling truth would be evolved. That done, he would think of it no more, never again. He would go to sleep.

He thought: "Let me see. Let me, first of all, examine the facts; then I will recall all I know of him, his treatment of my brother and me; I will seek for all the motives that could possibly have occasioned this preference. He was there when Jean was born? Yes, but he knew me before that. If he had entertained a mute, secret love for my mother, he would have preferred me; for it was through me, thanks to my scarlatina, that he became the intimate friend of my parents. Logically, therefore, he ought to have chosen me, to have had a more vivid affection for me, unless he felt for my brother, as he saw him growing up, an instinctive attraction and predilection."

Then, with a desperate effort of thought, of all his intellectual power, he retraced his recollections, in order to reconstruct, bring before his mind, recognize, understand this man—the man whom he had constantly seen, without caring for him, during all the years he had passed in Paris.

He felt, however, that walking, the slight motion of his steps, somewhat troubled his ideas, disar-



ranged their order, weakened their reach, and obscured his memory.

In order to throw on the past and its unknown events a keen look from which nothing could escape, he must remain motionless, in some large, empty place. He decided to go and sit on the pier, as he had done the other night.

As he drew near the harbor, he heard, in the direction of the open sea, a melancholy, sinister moan, like the bellowing of a bull, but longer and more powerful. It was a fog horn, the cry of ships lost in the fog.

A shudder shook his flesh and wrung his heart, such an echo was there in his soul and nerves of that cry of distress, which he fancied he had uttered himself. Another similar voice moaned in its turn, but farther away, then close by, the fog horn of the harbor replied to them, rending the night with its clamorous tone.

Pierre walked quickly to the pier without further thought, satisfied to plunge into the lugubrious and moaning darkness.

He sat down at the end of the pier, and closed his eyes to avoid the sight of the electric lights, veiled in mist, which made the port accessible at night, and of the red light of the lighthouse on the south jetty, which, however, could scarcely be distinguished. Then, turning sideways, he leaned his elbows on the granite, and covered his face with his hands.

His mind, without his speaking the word, kept repeating, as if to summon, evoke, and challenge his ghost, "Maréchal—Maréchal." And in the darkness of his closed eyelids he suddenly saw him as he had known him—a man of sixty, with a pointed,

white beard, and heavy eyebrows that were likewise white. He was neither tall nor short, had an affable air, soft gray eyes, a modest bearing, the look of an honest, tender, and simple soul. He called Pierre and Jean "my dear children"; he never appeared to prefer one to the other, and asked them together to dinner.

Pierre, with the persistence of a hound following a lost trail, began to recall the words, the gestures, the tones, the looks of this man who had disappeared from earth. He recalled him, gradually, just as he was, in his rooms in the Rue Tronchet, when he received his brother and himself at table.

Two maids waited on him, both old, who, for a long time past, doubtless, had acquired the habit of saying "Monsieur Pierre" and "Monsieur Jean."

Maréchal stretched out both hands to the young people, the right to one, the left to the other, as they entered.

"Good day, my children," he would say. "What news have you of your father and mother? As for me, they never write me a line."

The conversation went on pleasantly and familiarly on common topics. There was nothing extraordinary about the man's intellect, but he was gentle, charming, and gracious. He was certainly a good friend to them—one of those good friends of which one seldom thinks, because one is so sure of their friendship.

Memories now began to pour in upon Pierre. Maréchal, seeing him sometimes melancholy, and guessing at his poverty as a student, had offered and lent him money, spontaneously—some hundreds of francs, perhaps, forgotten by both, and never

repaid. The man, then, always loved him, always took an interest in him, since he was troubled about his needs. Then—then—why leave all his fortune to Jean? No; he had never apparently shown more affection for the younger than for the elder brother, been more thoughtful for one than the other, less tender apparently to this one than to that one. Then—then—he must have had a powerful and secret reason for giving all to Jean—all—and nothing to Pierre.

The more he thought of it, the more he revived the past of later years, the more the doctor considered the distinction made between them improbable and incredible.

An acute pang, an inexpressible anguish, entered his breast, and made his heart flutter like a shaken rag. Its springs seemed broken, and the blood, gushing through it, made it tremble violently in streams, tumultuously shaking and tossing it.

Then, half aloud, as one speaks in a nightmare, he muttered: "I must know! My God, I must know!"

He went back now still further, to the earliest days when his parents lived in Paris. But faces escaped him, and this muddled his recollections. He was, above all, anxious to recall Maréchal with blond, chestnut, or black hair. He could not do so; the later appearance of the man, when he was old, had effaced the others. He remembered, however, that he was slender, that he had a soft hand, and often brought flowers, very often, indeed; for his father constantly repeated:

"More bouquets. Why, it is madness, my dear fellow; you will ruin yourself on roses."

Maréchal would reply:



“ Let me alone; it gives me great pleasure.”

And suddenly the remembrance of his mother's tones, as she smiled and said, “ Thanks, my friend,” crossed his mind, so distinctly that he fancied he could hear her. She must have pronounced these three words very often, as they were so engraven on the memory of her son!

Maréchal, then, used to bring flowers—he, the rich man, the gentleman, the customer—to this little shopwoman, the wife of a small jeweler. Did he love her? How could he have become the friend of these shopkeepers if he had not loved the wife? He was a man of education and refinement. How many times he talked to Pierre of poetry and poets! His appreciation of writers was not that of an artist, but of a *bourgeois* who can feel emotion. The doctor had often smiled at his sentimental ideas, which seemed to him rather silly. To-day he understood that this sentimental man could never, never have been the friend of his father, who was so matter-of-fact, so earthy, so heavy, for whom the word poetry had no meaning.

Maréchal, then, young, free, rich, open to all tender emotions, one day, by chance, entered a shop, having probably noticed the pretty woman behind the counter. He bought something, came back, and talked day by day more familiarly, through his frequent purchases, acquiring an *entrée* to the house, the privilege of smiling at the young wife, and of shaking hands with the husband.

And afterward—afterward—oh, God!—afterward.

He had loved and caressed the first child, the jeweler's child, till the birth of the second; then down to his death he had remained a stranger; then,



his tomb closed, his body decomposed, his name effaced from the names of the living, having disappeared wholly and forever, having no longer to take any precautions, nothing to dread or to hide, he left all his fortune to the second child! Why? The man had intelligence; he must have understood and foreseen that he might, that he would almost infallibly, arouse a suspicion that this child was his. He would thus dishonor a woman! How could he have acted as he did if Jean had not been his son?

And suddenly a precise, terrible recollection crossed Pierre's mind. Maréchal was fair-haired, fair as Jean. He remembered now a little miniature which he had seen in Paris on the parlor chimneypiece, once upon a time, but which had disappeared. Where was it? Lost, or hidden? Oh, if he could only have possession of it for a second! His mother, perhaps, had it in the secret drawer where relics are hidden.

His agony at this thought became so poignant that he groaned aloud—one of those brief moans wrung from the heart by keen anguish. And suddenly, as if it heard him, as if it understood his condition and replied to him, the fog horn on the pier bellowed close to him. Its voice—the voice of a supernatural monster, more sonorous than thunder, a wild, formidable roar, made to overpower the voice of the winds and waves—spread through the darkness across the invisible sea buried in the fog.

Then, through the mist, near and far, similar cries arose in the night; terrible were these appealing screams from the huge blind steamers.

Again all was still.

Pierre opened his eyes, and stared in surprise at being there, aroused from his nightmare.

"I am mad," he thought, "I suspect my mother." And a flood of love and tenderness, of repentance, prayer, and desolation, inundated his heart. His mother! Knowing her as he knew her, how could he suspect her? Was not the soul, the life, of this simple, chaste, loyal woman more transparent than water? Any one who saw and knew her could not but judge her beyond suspicion. And it was he, her son, who doubted her! Oh, if he could have taken her in his arms at that moment, how he would have embraced and caressed her! How he would have knelt to her to ask pardon!

Could she have deceived his father? His father! Certainly he was an honest man, honorable and upright in his dealings, but his soul had never crossed the horizon of his shop. How could this woman, formerly very pretty, as he knew, and as could be still seen, endowed with a delicate, affectionate, tender nature, have accepted as her betrothed, and as her husband, a man so different from herself?

Why ask? She had married him as a girl marries the lad with money whom her parents present to her. They installed themselves at once in their store in the Rue Montmartre; and the young woman presiding at the counter, animated by the spirit of her new home, and by that subtle, sacred sense of community interest which replaces love and even affection in most of the homes of the business people in Paris, had begun to work with all her active and refined intelligence for the fortunes of the house. And her life had passed, in quiet, honorable uniformity without tenderness.

Without tenderness! Could a woman live without love? A young, pretty woman living in Paris, reading books, applauding actresses who die of passion on the stage, could she pass from youth to age without her heart being touched, if only once? He would not believe it of any other woman—why should he believe it of his mother?

Certainly she might have loved as others! Why should she be different from others, even if she was his mother?

She had been young, with all the poetic weaknesses that trouble the heart of the young. Confined and imprisoned in the shop by the side of a vulgar husband who always talked business, she had dreamed of moonlight, of travels, of kisses interchanged in the evening shadows. And then one day a man had entered, as lovers enter in books, and he had spoken as lovers do.

She had loved him. Why not? She was his mother. Well, was he to be blind and stupid to the extent of rejecting evidence because his mother was involved?

Had she listened to him? Yes, since the man had had no other friend; yes, since he had remained faithful to her when she was old and at a distance; yes, since he had left all his fortune to her son, to their son!

Pierre rose, quivering in such wrath that he would have liked to kill some one. His outstretched arms, his open hand, longed to smite, to slay, to bruise, to choke! Whom? All the world—father, brother, the dead man, his mother!

He started to return home. What would he do?

As he passed before a little tower near the signal pole, the strident scream of the fog horn



sounded right in his ear. His surprise was so great that he almost fell, and recoiled to the stone parapet. There he sat down, with no strength left, so great was the shock.

The steamer which was the first to answer seemed quite near, and appeared at the entrance, the tide being high.

Pierre turned and saw its red eye dimmed by the mist. Then, under the diffused gleam of the electric light, a huge black shadow outlined itself between the two piers. Behind him the voice of the watchman, the hoarse voice of a retired captain, cried:

“ Ship ahoy! ”

And, in the mist, the voice of the pilot standing on the bridge, with equal hoarseness, replied:

“ *Santa Lucia.* ”

“ Where from? ”

“ Italy. ”

“ What port? ”

“ Naples. ”

Before his troubled eyes, Pierre fancied he could see the crest of flame of Vesuvius, while at the foot of the volcano the fireflies were dancing in the orange groves of Sorrento or Castellamare. How often had he dreamed of those familiar names, as if he had known the districts! If he could but go away, at once, no matter where, and never come back, never write, never let it be known what had become of him! But, no; he must return, return to his paternal home, and sleep in his bed.

So much the worse. He would not return, he would wait till day. The sounds of the fog horns pleased him. He rose and began to march like an officer keeping his watch on deck.



Another enormous and mysterious ship followed the first one. It was an English ship returning from India.

He saw many more come in, emerging one after the other out of the impenetrable darkness. When the dampness of the fog became intolerable, Pierre set off toward the town. He was so cold that he entered a sailor's drinking place to get some grog, and when the hot brandy and pepper burned his palate and throat, he felt hope revive in him.

He had deceived himself, perhaps? He knew right well his own vacillating unreason. He had deceived himself beyond doubt. He had accumulated facts as one draws an indictment against an innocent person, whom it is always easy to condemn when one wishes to believe him guilty. After a night's rest, he would think quite differently. Then he went home to bed, and by force of will ended by falling asleep.



## CHAPTER V

### THE TELLTALE PORTRAIT



UT the doctor had not lost himself for more than an hour or two in a troubled sleep before he awoke in the darkness of his warm, closed room. He felt, even before he was able to think, that painful oppression, that unrest of soul, which the sorrow on which we have slept leaves in us. It would seem as if the unhappiness, the shock of which had only struck us the evening before, had, during repose, insinuated itself into our very flesh, and tortured and wearied like a fever. Recollection came to him abruptly, and he sat up in bed.

Then he went over again, slowly, one by one, all the arguments that had agonized his heart on the pier, while the fog horns were screaming. The more he thought, the less he doubted. He felt himself borne along by his logic to the intolerable certainty as by a hand that drags you along and strangles you.

He was thirsty, he was hot, his heart throbbed. He rose to open the window and breathe fresh air, and when he was up a slight noise reached him through the wall.

Jean was sleeping quietly, and snoring gently. He could sleep! He had no forebodings, he had suspected nothing! Their friend, Maréchal, had left him all his fortune. He accepted the money, as it seemed to him right and natural.

He slept, rich and satisfied, not knowing that his brother was worried and suffering. And there arose in Pierre a rage against this care-free and contented sleeper.

The day before he would have knocked at his door and, going in, would have sat beside the bed and said to him, before he was fairly awake, after being startled suddenly:

“Jean, you ought not to keep this legacy, which to-morrow might bring on your mother suspicion and dishonor.”

But to-day he could not speak; he could not say to Jean that he did not believe him to be their father's son. At present he must guard in secret, keep buried in his heart, the shame he had discovered; he must hide from all the blot he had detected, and which no one must discover, not even his brother—above all, not his brother.

Little did he think now of empty respect for public opinion. He would have liked all the world to accuse his mother, provided that he—he alone—he knew her to be innocent. How could he bear to live near her every day, and believe, as he saw her, that his brother's father was a stranger?

How calm and serene she was, nevertheless! How sure of herself she seemed! Was it possible

for a woman like her, with pure soul and upright heart, to fall without exhibiting later any signs of remorse, or any stings of conscience?

Remorse, remorse! It must formerly, in the early days, have tortured her; then it was blotted out, as everything is blotted out. Certainly she had wept for her fault, and by degrees had almost forgotten it. Have not all women, all, this prodigious faculty of forgetfulness, which makes them scarce recognize, after a few years, the man whose lips have kissed them again and again? The kiss strikes like lightning, love passes like a tempest; then life once more becomes calm as the sky, and begins again as before. Do we remember a passing cloud?

Pierre could not remain in his room. He felt the roof press on his head, and the walls stifled him. And, as he was very thirsty, he lighted his candle to go and drink a glass of water, fresh from the kitchen faucet.

He descended two flights; then, as he ascended with the carafe full, he sat down, in his nightshirt, on one of the steps of the stairs where a current of air was blowing, and drank out of the bottle in long gulps, like a runner out of breath. When he was quiet again, the silence of the dwelling affected him; then, one by one, he distinguished the slightest noises. At first it was the clock in the dining room, and its ticking seemed to him to grow louder second by second. Then again he heard some one snoring, the short, labored snoring of an old man; his father, no doubt; and he shuddered at the idea, as if it had only just come to him, that these two men, sleeping in the same house, father and son, were nothing to each other! No tie, not even the frailest, united



them, and they did not know it! They talked affectionately to each other, they embraced each other, they were glad or sorry together over the same things, as if the same blood ran in their veins. Yet two persons born at the two extremities of the world could not be more alien to each other than this father and this son. They believed they loved each other, because a lie had grown up between them. It was a lie that produced this paternal love and this filial love—a lie impossible to expose, and which no one should ever know but himself, the true son.

Still, still, if he were mistaken? How could he find out? Ah, if there were only a likeness, even a slight one, between his father and Jean, one of those mysterious likenesses that pass from great-grandfather to great-grandson, and show that the whole race descends directly from one source. It would be an easy thing for a medical man like him to recognize it—the form of the jaw, the curve of the nose, the distance between the eyes, the nature of the hair or teeth; even less than these, a gesture, a habit, a trick of manner, a transmitted taste, some sign or other quite characteristic for a trained eye.

He could recall nothing—no, nothing. But he had not looked carefully, he had not observed carefully, as he had had no reason for tracing out these imperceptible indications.

He rose to reënter his room, and began to mount the stairs with slow steps, pondering all the time. As he passed before his brother's door, he stopped short, his hand extended to open it. He was seized with an imperious desire to see Jean at once, to take a long look at him, to surprise him in his sleep, while the peaceful face and the relaxed features

were in repose, and when all the artificiality of life had disappeared. In this way he would seize the sleeping secret of his physiognomy, and if any appreciable resemblance existed, it would not escape him.

But if Jean woke, what should he say? How explain his visit?

He remained standing, his fingers grasping the door handle, and seeking a reason or pretext.

He remembered, all at once, that, eight days before, he had lent his brother a phial of laudanum to allay the pain of toothache. He might have toothache himself this night and come to get the bottle. Then he entered, but with a furtive step, like a thief.

Jean, with his mouth half open, was sleeping a profound animal sleep. His beard and fair hair made a splash of gold in the white linen. He did not awake, but he stopped snoring.

Pierre bent over him and gazed on him with eager eye. No; this young man did not resemble Roland; and, for the second time, his mind returned to the miniature of Maréchal that had disappeared. He must find it. If he saw it, perhaps he would doubt no longer.

His brother stirred, disturbed doubtless by his presence, or by the light of the candle in his face. Then the doctor retreated on tiptoe toward the door, which he closed noiselessly. He returned to his room, but did not go to bed.

The day was slow in coming. The hours struck, one after another, by the drawing-room clock, which had a deep, serious tone, as though this little specimen of the clockmaker's art had swallowed the bell of a cathedral. The sounds rose up through the

empty staircase, traversed walls and doors, and died away in the rooms, in the unhearing ear of the sleepers. Pierre walked to and fro from his bed to the window. What should he do? He was too much upset to pass the day at home. He wished still to be alone, at least till the next day, in order to reflect, to become calm, to fortify himself for the everyday life which he had to resume.

Well, he would go to Trouville, and watch the crowd swarming on the beach! It would divert him, change the current of his thoughts, and give him time to prepare himself for the horrible thing that he had found out.

At earliest dawn he rose and dressed himself. The fog had lifted; it was a beautiful day. As the Trouville boat did not sail till nine o'clock, the doctor thought that he ought to kiss his mother before leaving.

He waited for the hour when she usually rose, and then went down. His heart was throbbing so fast, as he touched the door, that he paused to take breath. His hand, as it lay on the door handle, was weak and quivering, almost incapable of the slight exertion of turning the knob to enter. He knocked. His mother's voice asked:

"Who is there?"

"Pierre."

"What do you want?"

"To say good morning, because I am going to pass the day at Trouville with some friends."

"But I am still in bed."

"Do not disturb yourself, then; I can kiss you on my return, this evening."

He hoped that he could get away without seeing her, without pressing on her cheeks the hypo-



critical kiss the thought of which nauseated him beforehand.

But she replied:

“ Wait a moment; I’ll open the door. You must wait till I get back into bed.”

He heard her bare feet on the floor, and then the sound of the bolt sliding. She cried:

“ Come in! ”

He went in. She was sitting up in bed, while beside her Roland, with a silk handkerchief round his head and his face to the wall, continued to sleep. Nothing but a shake of the arm could have awakened him. On the days he went fishing, the maid, who was rung up at the appointed hour by the sailor Papagris, would come and drag her master out of this invincible sleep.

Pierre, as he approached, looked at his mother, and it seemed to him all at once that he had never seen her.

She held up her face; he kissed her on both cheeks, and then seated himself on a low chair.

“ You arranged this party yesterday evening? ” she said.

“ Yes, yesterday evening.”

“ You will be back for dinner? ”

“ I do not know, yet. In any case, do not wait for me.”

He examined her with astonished curiosity. It was his mother, this woman! Her entire countenance, seen from childhood, since his eye could distinguish, her smile, her voice, so well known, so familiar, all at once appeared to him quite new, quite different from what they had been hitherto to him. He understood now that, loving her, he had never looked at her critically. Yet it was she, and



he knew every smallest detail of her countenance; but he perceived these little details clearly for the first time. His anxious attention, as he scrutinized this beloved face, revealed to him a difference in it, a physiognomy which he had never before discovered.

He rose to go, and then, suddenly yielding to an unconquerable desire to know what had been gnawing his heart since the evening before, he said:

"I say, mother, I thought I remembered a miniature of Maréchal that we had in our parlor in Paris."

She hesitated a second or two, or at least he imagined that she hesitated; then she said:

"Why, yes!"

"What has become of this portrait?"

Her answer, again, might have come quicker:

"That portrait—wait—I do not quite know—perhaps I have it in my desk."

"I would be very pleased if you would find it for me."

"Yes, I'll look. Why do you want it?"

"Oh, not for myself! I thought it would be quite natural to give it to Jean, and it would please my brother."

"You are right. It is a happy thought. I will look for it as soon as I get up."

He left the room.

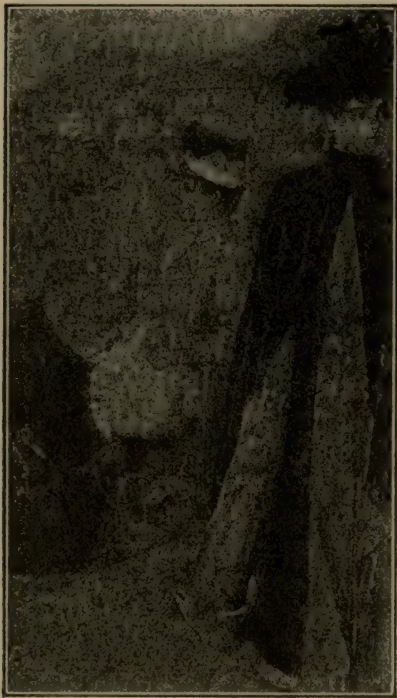
It was a cloudless day, without a breath of air. The people in the streets seemed light-hearted; merchants were going to their business, clerks to their office, girls to their shops. Some of them were singing, happy in the brightness of the day.

The passengers were already going on board the

Trouville boat. Pierre took his seat on a wooden bench at the very end of the boat.

He asked himself:

“ Was she disturbed by my question about the portrait, or only surprised? Has she mislaid it, or hidden it? Does she know, or does she not know, where it is? If she has hidden it, why did she do so? ”



Advancing steadily from deduction to deduction, he reached this conclusion:

The portrait, the portrait of a friend, the portrait of a dear friend, had remained in the parlor in full view till the day when the wife or the mother had been the first to perceive, before any one else, that it resembled her son. Doubtless,

for a long time she had been looking for this resemblance; and when she detected it, and recognized the fact that every one might, some day or other, detect it also, she had one evening removed the dangerous little miniature, and, not daring to destroy it, had concealed it.

Pierre now remembered very well that the miniature had disappeared long before their departure from Paris. It had disappeared, he believed, when the growth of Jean's beard brought out the likeness between him and the fair-haired young man who was smiling in the picture.

The motion of the boat as she put off disturbed the course of his thoughts. He rose and looked at the sea.

The little steamer passed the piers, turned to the left, and puffing, panting, and quivering, took her course to the distant coast, which was visible through the morning mist. Here and there the red sail of some heavy fishing smack, lying motionless on the smooth sea, had the appearance of a big rock rising from the water. The Seine, as it flowed from Rouen, looked like a large inlet of the sea, dividing two neighboring countries.

In less than an hour Trouville was reached, and, as it was the time for bathing, Pierre betook himself to the beach.

From a distance, it had the look of a long garden full of blooming flowers. On the great stretch of yellow sand, reaching from the pier to the Roches Noires, parasols of every color, hats of every shape, dresses of every shade, were seen in groups before the bathing houses, in lines along the beach, or scattered here and there, looking actually like enormous bouquets on a boundless prairie. The confused sounds, near or far, of voices sharpened by the thin air, the calls, the cries of children wading in the surf, the clear laughter of women, all mingled in a gentle, unceasing murmur, which blended with the imperceptible sea air, and was absorbed with it.

Pierre walked in the middle of these people,



more lost, more separated from them, more isolated, more immersed in torturing thought, than if he had been flung from a ship's deck into the sea, a hundred leagues from shore. He brushed against them; he heard, without listening, a few phrases; and he saw, without looking, the men talk to the women and the women smile on the men.

Then, all at once, as if awaking from sleep, he perceived them distinctly; and a feeling of hatred seized him, for they seemed happy and content.

He went on, brushing against the groups and walking round them, a prey to new thoughts. All these many-colored toilets that covered the sands like so many flowers, these pretty materials, these showy sunshades, all the ingenious inventions of fashion, from the tiny shoe to the extravagant hat, the seduction of gesture, voice, and smile—the whole coquetry displayed on the beach—suddenly seemed to him an immense unfolding of feminine perversity. All these dressed-up women wanted to please, to captivate, to tempt, some one. They had made themselves beautiful for men, for all men except the husband whom they no longer needed to conquer. They had made themselves beautiful for the lover of to-day and the lover of to-morrow; for the stranger they met, noticed, perhaps expected.

And these men seated by them, gazing into their eyes, speaking to them with faces close together, attracted them, desired them, hunted them like game, like elusive and fleeing game, although it seemed so near and so easy. The beach was, then, only a marketplace, where some sold themselves and others gave themselves, where some bargained for their caresses and others only held out promises. All these women had only one thought—to



make them desire that which was already given, sold, or promised to other men. And he reflected that it was always the same thing, the whole world over.

His mother had done like the rest; that was all! Like the rest? No! There were exceptions—many, many exceptions. The women he saw around him, rich, silly, seekers for love, were, on the whole, coquettes of the elegant world of fashion, or even coquettes of a more brazen kind; for respectable women did not mingle with this beach crowd, this legion of idlers.

The tide rose gradually, driving before it the first line of bathers. Groups were seen to rise with a start, and run from the yellow wave fringed with foam, taking their chairs with them.

The bathing boxes on wheels, drawn by a horse, were also taken in shore, and on the board walk, which ran along the beach from one end to the other, there was now an unbroken, dense, slow stream of elegant toilets, which formed two contrary currents, that jostled and mingled. Pierre, in a state of nervous exasperation, fled and plunged into the town, where he took breakfast at an ordinary wine shop near the outskirts.

When he had taken his coffee, he stretched himself out on two chairs before the door, and, as he had scarcely slept the night before, dozed in the shadow of a lime tree.

After some hours of repose, he roused himself, and, seeing that it was time to return to catch the boat, he set out, feeling overcome by a sudden weakness that had fallen on him during his slumber. He was determined to return, and learn if his mother had found the portrait of Maréchal. Would she

mention it first, or would he have to ask her again? Beyond question, if she waited till he interrogated her once more, she had a secret reason for not showing the portrait.

But when he had entered his room he hesitated to go down to dinner. He was suffering too much. His throbbing heart had not yet calmed itself. However, he made up his mind, and appeared in the dining room as they were sitting down to table.

They all appeared to be very happy.

"Well," said Roland, "how are you getting on with your shopping? I do not want to see anything before it's all in place."

His wife replied:

"Oh, very well. Only it requires a good deal of thought to avoid making a mismatch. The question of furniture is taking up our attention."

She had spent the day visiting with Jean the carpet stores and furniture stores. She wanted rich materials, rather gaudy, to strike the eye. Her son, on the other hand, wanted something simple, but elegant. So, over every sample shown them, they both of them reiterated their opinions. She maintained that the client required to be impressed, that he ought to feel, when he entered the reception room, that it gave the effect of wealth.

Jean, on the contrary, wishing to attract only an opulent and fashionable clientèle, desired to conquer the refined class by his modest and impeccable taste.

The discussion, which had lasted all day, began again with the soup.

Roland had no opinion. He repeated:

"I do not want to hear about anything. I'll go and see it when it is finished."

Madame Roland appealed to the judgment of her elder son.

"Come, Pierre, what do you think?"

His nerves were so excited that he longed to reply with an oath. He said, however, in a dry tone, vibrating with indignation:

"Oh, I quite agree with Jean, for my part! I like simplicity, which, as regards taste, is comparable to uprightness as regards character."

His mother resumed:

"Remember, we live in a town of business people, where good taste is not met everywhere."

Pierre replied:

"What matter? Is that a reason to imitate fools? If my townsfolk are stupid or dishonest, am I bound to follow their example? A good woman will not commit a fault because her neighbors set her a bad example."

Jean burst into laughter.

"Your comparisons sound as if they were taken from the maxims of a moralist."

Pierre made no rejoinder, and his mother and brother resumed their talk of draperies and easy-chairs.

He looked at them as he had looked at his mother, in the morning, before he left for Trouville. He looked at them like an observant stranger; and, in fact, he felt as if he had, all at once, entered a stranger's family.

His father, in particular, astonished him as he looked at him and thought about him. This fat, flabby man, this contented simpleton, was his father—his! No, no, Jean was not a bit like him.

His family! Two days ago an unknown, maleficent hand, the hand of a dead man, had rent and



shattered, one by one, all the bonds that held together these four souls. It was all over; they were broken forever. No mother now for him, for he could not love her when he could not venerate her with that absolute, tender, and pious respect which is necessary to the filial heart. No brother now for him, for this brother was the child of a stranger. There remained for him only a father—this fat man, whom he could not love in spite of himself.

He said abruptly:

“ Oh, mamma, did you find that portrait? ”

She opened her eyes in surprise.

“ What portrait? ”

“ Maréchal’s.”

“ No—that is, yes; I have not found it, but I think I know where it is.”

“ What are you talking about? ” Roland inquired.

Pierre answered:

“ A miniature of Maréchal, that used to be in our little parlor in Paris. I thought that Jean might like to have it.”

Roland exclaimed:

“ Yes, certainly, I remember it perfectly. I saw it as lately as the end of last week. Your mother pulled it out of her desk when she was arranging her papers. It was Thursday or Friday. You remember, Louise, don’t you? I was just going to shave when you took it from a drawer and placed it on a chair beside you, with a heap of letters, half of which you burned. Why, is it not strange that you should have handled that portrait scarcely two or three days before Jean’s legacy came? If I believed in presentiments, I should call that one.”

Madame Roland quietly replied:



“ Yes, I know where it is. I will go and get it at once.”

Then she had been lying! She had lied that very morning, when she replied to her son's question as to what had become of the miniature: “ I do not know exactly—perhaps I have it in my desk.”

She had seen it, touched it, handled it, looked at it, a few days before, and then she had put it back in the secret drawer with some letters—his letters.

Pierre looked at his mother who had lied to him. He looked at her with the exasperated wrath of a deceived son whose sacred affection had been betrayed, and with the jealousy of a man who, after being blinded for a long time, at length detects a shameful treason. If he had been that woman's husband, he, her son, he would have seized her by the wrists, by the shoulders, or by the hair, and have hurled her to the ground, and have struck, wounded, and crushed her! Yet he could say nothing, do nothing, state nothing, reveal nothing. He was her son, he had nothing to avenge, he had not been betrayed.

But yes, she had betrayed his affection, his filial respect. She owed it to him to be irreproachable, as all mothers owe it to their children. If his anger amounted almost to hatred, it was because he felt her to be more criminal toward him than toward his father himself.

The love of man and wife is a voluntary pact, where the frail one is guilty of perfidy only; but when a wife becomes a mother, she is more responsible, for Nature has confided to her a race. If she succumbs then, she is cowardly, unworthy, infamous!

“ Well, well,” said Roland suddenly, extending

his legs under the table, as he did every evening, to sip his glass of ratafia. "It is not unpleasant to be idle when one has a little competence. I hope Jean will invite us to some special dinners now, even if I should sometimes get a pain in my stomach."

Then, turning to his wife:

"Go bring the portrait, dear, as you have done eating. I should like to see it again."

She rose, took a candle, and left the room. After an absence which seemed long to Pierre, although it only lasted three minutes, Madame Roland returned, smiling, and holding by its ring an old-fashioned gilt frame.

"Here it is," she said. "I found it almost at once."

The doctor was the first to extend his hand. He took the portrait and examined it, holding it at arm's length. Then, feeling that his mother was looking at him, he slowly raised his eyes to his brother's face, to compare it with the picture. He almost said in the impulse of his violence: "Why, this is like Jean." If he did not dare to utter these terrible words, he displayed his thoughts by the way in which he compared the living face and the painted face.

They had, certainly, some traits in common, the same beard and the same brow, but nothing definite enough to warrant the declaration, "There is the father, and here is the son." It was rather a family resemblance, a similarity of physiognomy as of those in whose veins flows the same blood. But what was more decisive to Pierre's mind than this look in the two faces was the fact that his mother rose, turned her back, and, with unnecessary de-

lay, pretended to lock up the sugar and liqueurs in the closet.

She saw that he knew or at least suspected.

"Hand it to me," said Roland. Pierre handed over the miniature, and his father drew the candle nearer to see it better. Then in a softened tone he said:

"Poor fellow! To think that he was like that when we knew him. Heavens, how time flies! He was a handsome man, all the same, at that period, and pleasant in his manners. Was he not, Louise?"

As his wife did not reply, he continued:

"And what an even temper! I never saw him in a bad humor. Well, it's over; there's nothing remaining of him—except what he left to Jean. We can swear that he showed himself a good and loyal friend to the end. Even when dying, he did not forget us."

Jean, in his turn, extended his arm to take the portrait. He looked at it for some moments, and then said, in a tone of regret:

"I do not recognize him at all. I can only remember him with white hair." And he returned the miniature to his mother. She cast on it a rapid glance which was soon withdrawn, and seemed timid; then said, in her natural voice:

"It belongs to you, now, Jean, since you are his heir. We must take it to your new rooms."

As they entered the parlor, she placed the miniature on the mantelpiece, near the clock, where it used to stand.

Roland filled his pipe, Pierre and Jean lighted cigarettes. Usually one brother would smoke walking up and down the room; the other, buried in an easy-chair, with his legs crossed. The father al-



ways sat astride a chair, and spat into the fireplace.

Madame Roland, on a low seat, near a little table on which stood the lamp, usually did embroidery, knitted, or marked the linen.

This evening she commenced a piece of wool embroidery for Jean's bedroom. It was a difficult and complicated piece of work, and required all her attention to start it. Nevertheless, from time to time, while counting the stitches, she would raise her eyes and give a furtive glance at the little portrait of the dead man which was leaning against the clock. The doctor, as he crossed the narrow room in four or five strides, his hands behind his back and his cigarette between his lips, would encounter his mother's look every time.

One might say they were playing the spy on each other, and that war would be declared between them; and a painful unrest, an insupportable unrest, wrung Pierre's heart. Tortured and satisfied at the same time, he said to himself: "How she must be suffering at this moment, if she knows that I have found her out!" And, at each return toward the fireplace, he stopped for a few seconds to look at the blond countenance of Maréchal, just to show that a fixed idea haunted him. And the little portrait, smaller than an open hand, seemed a living, malevolent, dangerous personage that had suddenly entered this house and this family.

Suddenly the doorbell rang. Madame Roland, always so calm, was startled, and the start revealed to the doctor her condition of nervousness.

She said, however: "It must be Madame Rosémilly," and her anxious glance reverted again to the mantelpiece.



Pierre understood, or thought he understood, her terror and her anguish. Women's eyes are sharp, their wits nimble, their minds suspicious. When the incoming visitor should perceive this unknown miniature, she might, perhaps, at the first glance, discover the resemblance between that face and Jean's face. Then she would know and understand it all! He was seized with dread, a sudden, horrible dread, that the disgrace would be unveiled; and, turning back as the door opened, he took the portrait and slid it under the clock unobserved.

As he again encountered his mother's eyes, they seemed to him changed, troubled, and haggard.

"Good day," said Madame Rosémilly; "I have come to take a cup of tea with you."

While they gathered about her to ask how she was, Pierre disappeared by the open door.

They were surprised when they discovered his departure. Jean, who feared the young woman would deem it rude, muttered:

"What a bear!"

Madame Roland replied:

"You must not be angry with him—he is not very well to-day, and, moreover, is tired with his journey to Trouville."

"No matter," rejoined Roland. "That's no reason for going off like a savage."

Madame Rosémilly tried to smooth things down by saying:

"No, no. He took leave *à l'anglaise*. In society that is always the way when one leaves early."

"Well," replied Jean, "that may be so in society; but one does not treat one's family *à l'anglaise*, and that is what my brother has been doing the last few days."



## CHAPTER VI

### BITTER AND SWEET



THINGS went on thus in the Roland household for a week or two. The father went fishing, as usual; Jean, with his mother's assistance, moved into his new rooms; Pierre showed his gloomy countenance only at meal-times.

His father asked him one evening:

"Why the devil do you look as if you were at a funeral? I have noticed it before to-day."

And the doctor replied:

"Because I feel the terrible burden of life."

The old fellow understood nothing of his meaning, and with an air of disappointment continued:

"Upon my word, it is too bad! Ever since we had the luck to receive that legacy, everybody seems miserable; just as if some accident had happened to us, or as if we were in mourning for some one."

"I am in mourning for some one," said Pierre.

"You! for whom?"

"Some one you did not know, and whom I loved too well."

Roland imagined he was talking of some love affair, and asked:

"A woman, of course?"

"Yes, a woman."

"Dead?"

"No, worse. Lost!"

"Ah!"

Although he was astonished at this unexpected confidence made to him in his wife's presence, and at his son's strange tone, he did not pursue the subject, for he thought that such matters did not concern a third party.

Madame Roland seemed not to have heard; she was very pale, and more than once looked ill.

Her husband, seeing her sink into a chair, and hearing her breathe as if respiration were difficult, had said to her:

"You really look ill, Louise; you are tiring yourself out, probably, getting Jean settled. Rest a bit, confound it all! He is in no hurry, the young swell, for he is rich."

She shook her head without speaking.

Her pallor on this day was so remarkable that Roland again noticed it.

"Come," he said, "this won't do at all, my poor old girl; we must look after you."

Then, turning to his son:

"You see, don't you, that she is ill? You have examined her, I suppose?"

Pierre replied:

"No; I did not notice that she was ailing."

"Why, a blind man could see it," said old Roland furiously. "What's the use of being a doctor, if you cannot even see that your mother is indisposed? Now, look at her! Just look at her! No, indeed; one might be dying, and this doctor here would not notice it."

Madame Roland breathed heavily, and grew so pale that her husband exclaimed:

"She's going to faint!"

"No—no—it is nothing! It will pass off—it is nothing."

Pierre had approached her, and was looking at her fixedly.

"Come, what is the matter?" he said.

"Nothing—nothing, I assure you—nothing," she repeated in a low, hurried voice.

Roland had gone for some spirits of ammonia; he returned, and, handing the bottle to his son, said:

"Here—do something for her. You have felt her pulse, of course?"

As Pierre bent forward to take her wrist, she drew back her hand with such an abrupt movement that it struck a chair near her.

"Come," he said in a cold tone, "let me attend to you, as you are ill."

She rose and held out her arm. Her skin was burning, her pulse irregular and hard. He muttered:

"It is really pretty serious. You must take a sedative. I'll go and write a prescription."

While he was bending over the paper, writing, a slight sound of suppressed sighs, of choking, of short, interrupted breathing, made him suddenly turn round.

She was weeping, with her hands over her face.



Roland, in alarm, asked:

“ Louise, Louise, what is the matter? What is the matter? ”

She made no response, and seemed torn by some horrible and profound sorrow.

Her husband tried to take hold of her hands and pull them from her face. She resisted, repeating:

“ No, no, no. ”

Then he turned to his son:

“ Why, what is the matter with her? I never saw her like this. ”

“ It is nothing, ” said Pierre; “ a slight nervous attack. ”

It seemed to him as if his heart was consoled by the sight of her anguish, and that this grief lightened his resentment and diminished her burden of opprobrium. He looked at her like a judge satisfied with his work.

But all at once she rose and rushed to the door, so suddenly and abruptly that it could neither be foreseen nor prevented, and ran to shut herself up in her room.

Father and son were left face to face.

“ Do you understand anything of the case? ” said the former.

“ Yes, ” replied the latter. “ It comes from a simple little nervous disturbance which often declares itself at mamma’s age. It is likely that she will have many more attacks like this one. ”

Indeed, she had others, nearly every day; attacks which Pierre seemed to provoke by a single word, as if he held the secret of her strange and unknown trouble. He looked out for intermissions of repose in her face, and, with all the art of a

torturer, awoke by a single word the grief which for a moment had been calmed.

And he suffered as much as she. He suffered frightfully from the fact that he no longer loved her, no longer respected her, and that he was torturing her. When he had uncovered the wound that he had opened in the heart of this wife and mother, when he felt how wretched and how desperate she was, he would wander all alone through the town, so pierced with remorse, so racked with pity, so woebegone at seeing her thus crushed by his filial contempt, that he was tempted to fling himself into the sea and drown himself to make an end of it all.

Oh, how he wished to pardon her now! But he could not, for he was unable to forget. If he only could have avoided causing her suffering! But he could not do that, either, for he was always suffering himself. He returned home at meal-times, full of gentler resolutions. Then, when he caught sight of her, when he saw her eyes—once so frank and direct, now timid, distracted, shrinking—he spoke in spite of himself, for he could not keep back the treacherous phrase which rose to his lips.

The shameful secret, known to them alone, spurred him on against her. It was a poison that he had at present in his veins, and that made him long to bite like a mad dog.

There was nothing now to prevent his torturing her unceasingly; for Jean lived almost altogether in his new rooms, and returned home every evening only to dine and sleep with his family.

He often noticed the bitter words and violent manner of his brother, but attributed them to jealousy. He promised himself that he would put him in his proper place and give him a lesson some day

or other, for the family life was becoming very unpleasant, owing to these continual scenes. But, as he lived out of the house at this time, he suffered less from Pierre's offensive rudeness, and his love of peace induced him to be patient. Besides, his good fortune had intoxicated him, and his thoughts were occupied chiefly with matters that directly interested himself alone. He would come in full of new little cares, occupied with the cut of a jacket, the shape of a felt hat, the proper size of visiting cards. And he talked persistently about all the details of his apartment—of shelves placed in the bedroom cupboard to hold his linen, of wardrobes placed in the vestibule, and of electric burglar alarms.

It had been decided that when he formally moved into his new apartment there should be an excursion to Saint Jouin, and that, after dinner, the party should return and take tea with him. Roland wished to go by sea; but the distance and the uncertainty as to the time when they would arrive by this route, if the wind was contrary, led them to reject his proposal, and a carriage was hired for the occasion.

They started about ten o'clock, so as to arrive for breakfast. The dusty highroad traversed this Norman country district, to which the undulating plains and tree-girt farms gave the appearance of a limitless park. As the carriage rolled on at a slow trot drawn by two heavy horses, the Roland family, Madame Rosémilly, and Captain Beausire, deafened by the noise of the wheels, remained silent, and closed their eyes amid a cloud of dust.

The harvest was ripe. Beside the dull green of the clover, and the bright green of the beets, the



fields of yellow grain lighted up the landscape with a tawny golden gleam. They seemed to have absorbed the sunlight that fell upon them. Here and there the reapers were at work; and in the fields under the scythe the laborers were seen, swinging rhythmically as they swept the huge, wing-shaped blade over the surface of the ground.

After a drive of two hours, the carriage turned to the left, passed a windmill in motion—a gray, melancholy wreck, half rotten and condemned, the last survivor of the old mills—and then entered a pretty courtyard, and drew up before a gay little house, a celebrated inn of the district.

The landlady, who was named *la belle* Alphon-sine, came smiling to the door, and extended her hand to the two ladies, who were hesitating at the carriage step, which was awkwardly high.

On the margin of the lawn, beneath the shade of some apple trees, a party of strangers were already breakfasting in a tent; they were Parisians returning from Étretat, and the sound of voices and laughter and the rattle of dishes could be heard in the house.

All the large halls being occupied, they had to dine in a private room. Monsieur Roland suddenly saw some shrimp nets hanging on the wall.

“ Ah, ha! ” he cried, “ do they fish for prawns here? ”

“ Yes, ” replied Beausire, “ this is the very spot where they take more than on any other part of the coast. ”

“ The devil! Let us go there after breakfast! ”

It was ascertained that it was low water at three o'clock, and it was resolved that all the party should pass the afternoon on the rocks looking for shrimps.



They ate sparingly, to avoid a rush of blood to the head when they put their feet in the water. They wished, also, to reserve their appetites for dinner, which was ordered on a grand scale, to be ready at six when they returned.

Roland could not control his impatience. He wanted to buy the special apparatus for this kind of fishing, which resembles very much the nets used to catch butterflies in the fields.

Alphonsine, still smiling, lent them the nets; then she assisted the ladies in improvising a costume, so as to avoid wetting their dresses; she lent them some petticoats, thick worsted stockings, and bathing slippers. The men took off their boots, and replaced them with some wooden shoes purchased from the local cobbler.

They started out, net on shoulder and basket on back. Madame Rosémilly was charming in this costume, with an unexpected, rustic, bold style of beauty.

The petticoat borrowed from Alphonsine, coquettishly raised and held by a few stitches, so as to enable the wearer to run and leap, without fear, among the rocks, displayed the well-formed ankle of a woman at once agile and strong. She had found, to cover her head, an immense gardener's hat of yellow straw, with an enormous brim, which she turned up on one side with a sprig of tamarisk, which gave her the dauntless air of a dashing mousquetaire.

Jean, since receiving his legacy, had asked himself every day whether he should marry her or not. Each time he saw her he decided to make her his wife; but when he was alone he thought that by waiting he would have time to reflect. She was not

as rich as he was now, for she had an income of only twelve thousand francs a year, but the principal was invested in real estate, in farms, and lots in Havre, on the docks, and this might, in time, be worth a large sum. Their fortunes, thus, were almost equal, and the young widow certainly pleased him very much.

As he now saw her walking before him, he thought, "Well, I must decide. Beyond question, I could not do better."

They followed the slope of a little valley, descending from the village to the cliff, and the cliff at the end of this valley was nearly three hundred feet above the sea. Framed by green banks descending to right and left of it, a spacious watery triangle, silvery blue in the sunlight, could be seen, and a scarcely perceptible sail looked like an insect on its surface. The sky, filled with radiance, blended with the water so that the eye could not distinguish a dividing line, and the two ladies, who walked in advance of the three men, cast on this clear horizon the clear-cut outline of their compact figures.

Jean, with ardent glance, saw speeding before him the well-turned ankle, the supple waist, and the enticing hat of Madame Rosémilly. Her swift motion stimulated his eagerness and impelled him to those decisive steps which the timid and irresolute are apt to take abruptly. The warm air, in which was blended the odor of the coast, of the gorse, the clover, the grasses, and the marine odor of the rocks uncovered by the tide, intoxicated his senses still further, and he became a little more decided every second at each step, at every look he cast on the graceful outline of the young woman. He de-

cided to hesitate no longer, but to tell her that he loved her, and wanted to marry her. The fishing party would help him; it would render a *tête-à-tête* more easy, and, besides, it would furnish a pretty background, a pretty scene for words of love, with their feet in a basin of limpid water, as they watched the long feelers of the shrimps darting through the seaweed.

When they reached the end of the valley at the edge of the bluff, they perceived a little path that ran down the cliff; and beneath them, about halfway between the sea and the foot of the precipice, a wondrous chaos of enormous rocks, that had fallen or been hurled down, heaped one on the other on a kind of grassy, broken plain, that disappeared toward the south, and which had been formed by ancient landslips. On this long strip of brushwood and turf, shaken down, one might say, by volcanic action, the fallen rocks resembled the ruins of a great vanished city, that, once on a time, had looked down on the ocean, itself dominated by the white and endless wall of the cliff.

"How beautiful!" said Madame Rosémilly, pausing.

Jean joined her, and with beating heart offered his hand to guide her down the narrow stairway cut in the rock.

They went on ahead, while Beausire, straightening himself on his short legs, held out his bent arm to Madame Roland, who grew dizzy at sight of the abyss beneath her.

Roland and Pierre came last; and the doctor had to support his father, who was so overcome by dizziness that he sat down, and slid thus from step to step.



The young people at the head of the party went rapidly, and suddenly caught sight of a spring of clear water spurting from a little hole in the cliff, by the side of a wooden bench which formed a resting place about the middle of the slope. The water at first spread into a basin about the size of a wash-hand bowl, which it had excavated for itself, and then, falling in a cascade of about two feet in height, flowed across the path where a carpet of cress had grown, and then disappeared in the reeds and grass, across the upheaved plain on which were the rocks.

"Oh, how thirsty I am!" cried Madame Rosémilly.

But how could they drink? She tried to scoop up some water in her hands, but it escaped between her fingers. Jean had a bright idea; he placed a stone in the road, and she knelt on it to drink from the spring itself, which was now on a level with her mouth.

When she raised her head, covered with glittering drops sprinkled by thousands over her face, her hair, her eyelashes, Jean, bending toward her, whispered:

"How pretty you are!"

She replied in the tone one assumes in scolding a child:

"Will you hold your tongue?"

These words were their first attempt at flirtation.

"Come," said Jean, very much discomfited, "let us be off before they overtake us."

She perceived, indeed, that Captain Beausire was quite close to them. He was descending backward in order to support Madame Roland with both hands, while, higher up and farther away, M. Ro-



land, in a sitting posture, was dragging himself down by his feet and elbows with the speed of a tortoise, and Pierre went before him to superintend his movements.

The path became less steep, and now formed a sloping road that skirted the enormous blocks that had formerly fallen from the cliff. Madame Rosémilly and Jean began to run, and were soon on the shingle. They crossed it to gain the rocks, which stretched out in a long flat surface covered with seaweed, amid which gleamed innumerable patches of water. The tide was very low beyond this slimy surface of glistening green and black wrack.

Jean rolled up his trousers to the knee, and his sleeves to the elbow, so as to go into the water without fear of getting wet, and cried "Forward!" as he boldly leaped into the first pool that presented itself.

With more prudence, though with equal determination to wade into the water at once, the young woman went round the narrow basin with timid steps, for she slipped on the slimy weeds.

"Do you see anything?" she said.

"Yes, I see your face reflected in the water."

"If you see only that, you will not have any fishing to boast of."

He said in a tender voice:

"Ah, that is what I should prefer to capture above all things!"

She laughed.

"Try, then, and you'll see how it slips through your net."

"Well, if you would like——"

"I would like to see you catch some prawns—and nothing more—just at present."

"You are cruel. Let us go farther; there is nothing here."

He offered her his hand to steady her on the greasy rocks. She leaned on it rather timidly; and he, all at once, felt his being invaded by love's vibrations, filled with longing, as if the passion that had lain dormant in him had waited for that day to burst forth.

They soon reached a deeper pool where, beneath the rippling water that reached the distant sea by an invisible channel, long, fine seaweeds of bright colors, like pink and green hair, floated as if they were swimming.

Madame Rosémilly exclaimed:

"Look, look, I see one—a big one, a very big one, down there!"

He perceived it in turn and went down into the pool, although the water wet him to the waist.

But the creature, moving its long feelers, quietly retreated before the net. Jean drove it toward the wrack, sure of catching it there. When it found itself blockaded, it made a sudden dash over the net, crossed the pool, and disappeared.

The young woman, who was eagerly watching his attempt, could not refrain from crying:

"Ah, clumsy!"

He was vexed, and, without thinking, dragged his net through a pool full of weeds. As he raised it to the surface, he saw in it three large transparent prawns, which had been dragged unexpectedly from their invisible hiding place.

He presented them in triumph to Madame Rosémilly, who dared not touch them for fear of the sharp, dentated point that arms their heads.

At last she decided to take them; and, seizing

them between two of her fingers, she placed them, one after the other, in her basket, with some seaweed to keep them alive. Then, on finding a shallower piece of water, she stepped into it with hesitating steps, and catching her breath as the cold struck her feet, began to catch shrimps herself. She was skilful and cunning, with a supple wrist and a sportsman's instinct. Almost at every cast she brought out some victims, whom she deceived and surprised by the ingenious slowness with which she swept the pool.

Jean was catching nothing; but he followed her step by step, touched her dress, bent over her, pretended to be in despair at his awkwardness, and wished her to teach him.

"Show me how," he said, "show me!"

Then as their two faces were reflected, one beside the other, in the clear water, which the deep-growing seaweeds formed into a limpid mirror, Jean smiled at the face so near his which looked up to him from below, and at times threw to it, from the tips of his fingers, a kiss which seemed to fall on it.

"Oh, how tiresome you are," the young woman said. "My dear fellow, never do two things at the same time."

He replied:

"I am only doing one. I love you."

She drew herself up and said in a serious tone:

"Come, now! What is the matter with you for the last ten minutes? Have you lost your head?"

"No, I have not lost my head. I love you, and at last dare to tell you so."

They were now standing in the pool of seawater that rose nearly to their knees, and, with

their dripping hands leaning on their nets, looked into the depth of each other's eyes.

She resumed in a playful but rather annoyed tone:

"You have taken a wrong time to speak to me. Could you not wait another day, and not spoil my fishing?"

He murmured:

"Pardon me, but I could not keep silence. I have loved you a long time. To-day you have completely turned my head."

Then she seemed at once to take her resolution, and to resign herself to talk business and renounce amusement.

"Let us sit on this rock," she said: "we shall be able to talk quietly."

They climbed on a rock a little higher; and when they were seated, side by side, their feet hanging down in the sunlight, she rejoined:

"My friend, you are no longer a child, and I am not a young girl. Both of us know what we are about, and can weigh all the consequences of our acts. If you decide to-day to declare your love to me, I suppose naturally you wish to marry me."

He had scarcely expected such a clear statement of the situation, and answered sheepishly:

"Why, yes!"

"Have you spoken to your father and mother?"

"No. I wished to know if you would accept me."

She extended to him her hand, which was still wet, and as he placed his own in it with fervor:

"I am willing," she said. "I believe you to be



good and loyal. But do not forget that I would not displease your parents."

"Do you think that my mother has foreseen nothing, and that she would love you as she does if she did not desire a marriage between us?"

"Nevertheless, I am somewhat disturbed."

They were silent. On his part, he was astonished that she was so little disturbed and so sensible. He expected some pretty airs and graces, refusals which say yes, a whole coquettish comedy of love blended with fishing and the splashing of water. And it was all over; he felt himself bound and married in a score of words. They had nothing more to say now that they understood each other; and both remained somewhat embarrassed at what had passed so rapidly between them, and were even somewhat confused, not venturing to speak or to fish; not knowing what to do.

The voice of M. Roland came to the rescue.

"This way, this way, young people! Come and see Beausire. He is emptying the sea, the old rascal."

The Captain, indeed, had marvelous success. Wet up to the loins, he went from pool to pool, detecting at a glance the best spots, and with a slow, sure movement of his net searching every cavity beneath the seaweeds.

And the pretty, transparent prawns, of a light gray color, danced about on the hollow of his hand as he took them out of the net to fling them into his basket.

Madame Rosémilly, surprised and delighted, kept close beside him, imitating him as well as she could, almost forgetting her promise and Jean, who was dreamily following her, to abandon herself to

the childish pleasure of collecting the little creatures beneath the floating grasses.

Roland suddenly broke the silence by exclaiming:

“ Here is Madame Roland coming to join us.”

At first she had remained with Pierre on the beach, for neither of them had any desire to amuse themselves by running over the rocks and splashing themselves in the pools, and yet they hesitated about remaining together. She was afraid of him, and her son was afraid of her and of himself—afraid of his cruelty which he could not master.

They sat down then beside each other on the shingle, and in the warm sunshine tempered by the sea air, in presence of the limitless horizon of blue water with silver reflections, both thought at the same time, “ How pleasant it would have been for us here, once upon a time! ”

She dared not speak to Pierre, for she knew that his answer would be harsh; he dared not speak to his mother, for he knew, too, that in spite of himself he would speak rudely.

He poked among the round pebbles with his cane, pushing and striking them. She had picked up three or four little stones, which she slowly and mechanically passed from one hand to the other. Her wandering glances presently discovered, in the middle of the field of seaweed before her, her son Jean fishing with Madame Rosémilly. She followed them with her eyes, watching their movements, and clearly comprehending with her maternal instinct that they were not talking in their usual manner. She saw them bending over side by side as they looked at each other in the water, standing up, face to face, when they questioned their hearts, and then

climbing to a seat on the rock to converse with each other.

Their outlines stood out clearly defined on the horizon, looking like symbolic statues amid this wide expanse of sky, sea, and cliff.

Pierre also looked at them, and a hard laugh escaped from his lips.

Without turning her head, Madame Roland said: "What is the matter?"

Still with his sardonic smile, he replied:

"I'm taking a lesson. I am learning how men prepare themselves to be the dupes of women."

She gave a start of anger and revolt, exasperated at what she took to be his meaning.

"For whom do you mean that?"

"For Jean, by Jove! It is comical to see them."

She replied in a low voice, trembling with emotion:

"Oh, Pierre, how cruel you are! That woman is uprightness itself. Your brother could not choose better."

He laughed aloud, a forced, jesting laugh.

"Ha! ha! ha! Uprightness itself! All women are uprightness itself, and all husbands fools. Ha! ha! ha!"

She rose without replying and rapidly descended the shingly slope; and at the risk of slipping, falling into the holes concealed by the weeds, or of breaking her leg or arm, she went, without looking, almost at a run, across the pools straight toward her other son.

Jean, seeing her approach, cried to her:

"Well, mamma, have you made up your mind to join us?"

Without replying, she seized his arm, as to say,  
“ Save me! Protect me! ”

He saw her trouble, and in great surprise said:

“ How pale you are! What is the matter? ”

“ I almost fell. I am timid on these rocks. ”

Jean guided her, supported her, explained the sport, and tried to interest her. But as she scarcely listened, and as he felt an intense need of confiding in some one, he drew her aside, and said, in a low voice:

“ Guess what I have done. ”

“ Why—why—I cannot! ”

“ Guess. ”

“ I—I cannot. ”

“ Well, then, I have told Madame Rosémilly that I wanted to marry her. ”

She made no reply; her head was in a whirl, her soul distressed so that she could hardly understand.

She repeated:

“ Marry her? ”

“ Yes. Have I done right? She is charming, is she not? ”

“ Yes, charming. You have done right. ”

“ Then you approve? ”

“ Yes, I approve. ”

“ How oddly you say that! One might fancy that—that you were not pleased. ”

“ Oh, yes. I am—pleased. ”

“ Sure? ”

“ Quite sure. ”

To prove it, she took him in her arms and kissed him with a mother's fondest kisses.

Then, when she had wiped her eyes, which had filled with tears, she perceived down on the beach a figure lying face downward, looking like a corpse,



with its face on the shingle. It was the other brother, Pierre, who was brooding in despair.

She led her "little Jean" farther away still, quite to the water's edge, and they talked long about the marriage which lay so near his heart.

The rising tide drove them toward the others, whom they rejoined, and the whole party ascended the beach to the cliff, arousing Pierre, who pretended to be asleep. They sat long at dinner, which was moistened with plenty of wine.



## CHAPTER VII

### THE THUNDERBOLT



AS they drove home all the men except Jean were sleepy. Beausire and Roland would drop their heads every five minutes on some neighboring shoulder, which shook them off with a shrug. They then drew themselves up, stopped snoring, opened their eyes, and said, "Very fine weather," and almost immediately fell over asleep again on the other side. When they reached Havre their drowsiness was so profound that they could scarcely shake it off; and Beausire even refused to go up to Jean's rooms, where tea was awaiting them. They put him down at his own door.

The young lawyer for the first time was going to sleep in his new apartments; and he rejoiced, with a somewhat puerile joy, at the opportunity of showing, this very evening, to the woman he was engaged to the rooms she would soon occupy.

The servant girl had gone. Madame Roland had declared that she would boil the water and serve the tea herself, as she did not like servants to sit up, for fear of fire.

No one except Madame Roland, her son, and the workmen had yet entered the rooms, so that the surprise might be complete when it was seen how pretty they were.

When they entered the vestibule Jean begged them to wait. He wished to light the candles and lamps; and he left Madame Rosémilly, his father, and brother in the dark till he exclaimed "Enter!" and threw wide the folding doors.

The glass corridor, lighted by a chandelier and glass globes of various colors concealed amid the palms, india-rubber trees, and flowers, seemed at first like a scene in a theater. There was a pause of admiration, and Roland, astonished at this luxury, felt a desire to clap his hands as at a transformation scene.

They next entered the first reception room, a small room with hangings of old gold to match the chairs. The large room for the reception of clients was very simple, of pale salmon color, and had an air of elegant severity.

Jean sat down in the armchair before his desk, and in a grave, rather forced voice, said:

"Yes, Madame, the authorities are explicit, and, with the assent which I announced to you, give me absolute assurance that within three months the affair of which we spoke will be satisfactorily settled."

He looked at Madame Rosémilly, who smiled as she looked at Madame Roland, and the latter taking her hand pressed it warmly.

Jean was radiant, and, cutting a schoolboy caper, cried:

“How well the voice carries! This room would be excellent to plead a case in.”

He began to declaim:

“If humanity alone, if that sentiment of natural sympathy which we feel for all suffering, was to be the ground of the acquittal which we ask from you, we should appeal, gentlemen of the jury, to your pity, to your hearts as fathers and as men; but we have on our side justice, and it is the question of justice alone that we shall bring before you.”

Pierre looked at the rooms which might have been his, and was irritated at the child's play of his brother, considering him decidedly silly and witless.

Madame Roland opened a door to the right.

“This is the bedroom,” she said.

In furnishing it she had lavished all her maternal affection. The hangings were of Rouen cretonne made to imitate the old Norman material. A Louis Quinze design, a shepherdess in a medallion held by the kissing bills of two doves, gave the walls, curtains, bed, and chairs a coquettishly rustic air that was very attractive.

“How charming!” cried Madame Rosémilly, who became rather serious as she entered this room.

“Do you like it?” asked Jean.

“Excessively!”

“If you only knew how pleased I am!” They exchanged a momentary glance of trusting affection.

Still, she was, however, slightly embarrassed, somewhat confused, in this sleeping room, which was to be her nuptial chamber. She had noticed, on



entering, that the bed was very large, a genuine family affair, chosen by Madame Roland, who had without doubt foreseen and desired the approaching marriage of her son; and this maternal foresight gave her pleasure, for it seemed to say they were expecting her to be one of the family.

When they returned to the reception room, Jean suddenly opened the door to the left, showing the round dining room, with its three windows and its Japanese decorations. Mother and son had here indulged their fancy without restraint. This room, with its bamboo furniture, images, plaques, gold-embroidered silks, its bead curtain looking like drops of water strung together, its fans nailed to the walls to hold up tapestry, its screens, its swords, its masques, its storks with real feathers, all its little knick-knacks of porcelain, wood, ivory, paper, mother-of-pearl, and bronze, had that pretentious, stiff look which awkward hands and ignorant eyes give to things which require the highest degree of tact, taste, and artistic education. Yet this room was the most admired. Pierre alone took some exceptions, with a rather bitter irony, which wounded his brother.

The table was decked with fruits in pyramids and cakes piled up in various forms.

No one was very hungry. They ate some fruit, and nibbled at the pastry, and, after the lapse of an hour, Madame Rosémilly demanded permission to retire.

It was decided that M. Roland should escort her to her door, and they started at once; while Madame Roland, in the absence of the servant, cast a housewife's eye over the apartment to see that nothing was lacking.

" Must I come back for you? " Roland asked.

She replied after some hesitation:

" No, my dear, go home and go to bed. Pierre will take me home."

As soon as they had left she blew out the wax candles, locked up the cakes, the sugar, and the liqueurs in a cupboard, the key of which she gave to Jean. Then she went into the bedroom, turned down the bed, and saw if the carafe was filled with fresh water and the window securely closed.

Pierre and Jean remained in the smaller reception room, the latter still sore at his brother's criticism on his taste, the former more and more irritated at seeing his brother in these apartments.

They both sat down and smoked without speaking. Suddenly Pierre exclaimed:

" By George, the widow looked pretty well tired out this evening; excursions do not suit her."

Jean felt himself being overcome by one of those sudden and furious fits of wrath which seize good-natured men when their feelings are wounded.

His breath failed him, so strong was his emotion, as he stammered out:

" For the future do not let me hear you say ' the widow ' when you are speaking of Madame Rosémilly."

Pierre turned on him haughtily:

" You are giving me orders, it seems. Are you becoming crazy? "

Jean drew himself up:

" I am not becoming crazy, but I have had enough of your manners toward me."

Pierre gave a grin.

" Toward you? Are you going to fight Madame Rosémilly's battles? "

“ Madame Rosémilly is going to be my wife! ”  
The other laughed still louder.

“ Ha! ha! Very good. Now I see why I must not call her ‘ the widow.’ You have, however, taken a very odd way of announcing your marriage to me.”

“ No jesting—I won’t have it. Do you hear? I won’t have it! ”

Jean came up to him, pale, his voice trembling, exasperated at his ironical way of talking of the woman whom he loved and had chosen.

But Pierre suddenly became just as furious; all his impotent wrath, all the bitterness that he had kept down, all the rebellious feelings he had crushed, and all his silent despair, flew to his head like a congestion of the brain.

“ You dare to talk thus? You dare? Be silent, I say! Those are my orders, mine, do you hear? Those are mine! ”

Jean, surprised at this violence, was silent for a few seconds, searching, in that confusion of mind into which rage throws us, for something, some sentence, some word, which would pierce his brother to the heart.

He struggled to gain the mastery over himself in order to make his words tell; and, speaking slowly to make them more cutting, he resumed:

“ I have known for a long time that you were jealous of me; ever since the day when you began to say ‘ the widow ’ because you knew it annoyed me.”

Pierre burst into one of his usual peals of harsh and insulting laughter.

“ Ha! ha! *Mon Dieu!* Jealous of you? I jeal-

ous of you? I! I! Why? Jealous of what?—your brains or your looks? ”

Jean felt that he had touched the wound to the quick.

“ Yes. You are jealous of me, jealous since childhood; and you became uncontrollable when you saw this lady prefer me, while she would have nothing to say to you.”

Pierre stammered, so exasperated was he at the supposition:

“ I!—I jealous of you! On account of that silly doll—that plump little goose! ”

Jean saw his blows told, and continued:

“ How about the day you tried to outrow me in the *Pearl*? And all that you said in her presence, to show yourself off? Why, you are dying of jealousy! When this fortune came to me you became frantic, you detested me, and showed it in every way. You have made us all miserable. There is not an hour when you do not give vent to the anger that is choking you.”

Pierre closed his fists in rage, and in an irresistible longing to rush at his brother and seize him by the throat.

“ Oh, keep quiet for once! Don't speak of that fortune.”

Jean cried:

“ Why, jealousy is exuding from every pore of your skin. You cannot say a word to my father, my mother, or me, without letting it burst out. You pretend to despise me, because you are jealous! You pick quarrels with everybody, because you are jealous! And now when I am rich, you can contain yourself no longer: you have become venomous, you torture our mother as if it were her fault! ”



Pierre had retreated to the mantelpiece, his mouth half open, his eyes dilated, a prey to one of those paroxysms of rage which lead men to crime.

He repeated in a lower, trembling tone:

“ Silence, I say, silence! ”

“ No! For a long time I have wanted to tell you what I thought. You have given me an opportunity: so much the worse for you! I love a certain woman: you know it, and ridicule her in my presence. You drive me to extremity: so much the worse for you! But I will crush your viper fangs. I will force you to respect me.”

“ Respect you—you! ”

“ Yes, me! ”

“ Respect you—you! who have dishonored us all by your greed! ”

“ What do you say? Say it again! Say it again! ”

“ I say one does not accept the fortune of one man when one passes for the son of another.”

Jean remained motionless, without comprehending, dazed at the insinuation of which he had a presentiment.

“ What! You say—— Say it once more! ”

“ I say all the world is chattering, all the world is gossiping, that you are the son of the man who left you his fortune. Well, a decent man does not accept wealth which dishonors his mother.”

“ Pierre—Pierre—Pierre—do you know what you are saying? Is it you—you, who utter such an infamy? ”

“ Yes, it is I. Do not you see that I am dying of grief for more than a month; that I pass my nights without sleeping, and my days in hiding myself like a wild beast; that I do not know what I am

saying or doing, nor what will become of me, so wretched am I, so crazed with shame and grief? for what was at first a surmise is knowledge now."

"Pierre, be silent! Mamma is in the next room. Remember, she may hear us—she does hear us!"

But he had to pour out his heart. He told everything, his suspicions, his arguments, his struggles, his conviction, and the story of the portrait that had again disappeared.

He spoke in short, detached sentences, almost incoherently, like a person who is crazy.

He seemed to have forgotten Jean, and his mother in the next room. He spoke as though no one heard him, because he had to speak, because he had suffered so much, and had so sternly repressed his sorrow. But now it had broken bounds.

Jean, distracted and almost convinced all at once by his brother's vehement emotion, leaned against the door, behind which he guessed that their mother had heard them.

She could not get out without passing through the parlor. As she had not done so, it was because she dared not.

Suddenly, stamping his foot, Pierre exclaimed:

"Oh, what a beast I am to have talked like this!"

And he rushed bareheaded to the staircase.

The noise of the street door, as it closed with a bang, roused Jean from the deep stupor into which he had sunk. Some seconds passed, seconds longer than some hours, and his mind was benumbed as in the dullness of idiocy. He felt that he would have to think and act before long; but he waited without even the wish to understand or know or recall anything, through fear, weakness, and cowardice. He

belonged to that class of temporizers who put everything off till to-morrow; and, when it was necessary that he should take a resolution on the spot, he always instinctively sought to gain a few moments.

But the profound silence which now surrounded him after the loud exclamations of Pierre, this sudden silence of the walls and the furniture, with the bright gleam of the six candles and two lamps, struck him with such a shock that he longed to run away as his brother had done.

Then he roused himself and tried to think.

He had never encountered any difficulty in his life. He was one of those men who let themselves drift like running water. He had been a good scholar in the classroom to avoid punishment, and had finished his legal studies with regularity because his life was calm. Everything in the world appeared to him natural, without otherwise awakening his attention. He had a temperamental love of order, decency, and quiet, and his mind had no kinks in it; and in face of this catastrophe he was like a man who falls into the water without ever having learned to swim.

At first he attempted to doubt his brother. Had he lied from hatred or from jealousy?

And yet, how could he have been such a wretch as to speak thus of their mother, if he had not himself been frenzied by despair? And Jean still heard in his ears, still saw with his eyes, still felt in his nerves, in his inmost flesh, certain words, certain cries of suffering, some intonations and gestures of Pierre, that were so full of anguish as to be irresistible, as irrefutable as certainty.

He was too crushed to move or exert his will. His distress became intolerable; and he felt that



behind the door was his mother, who had heard all and was waiting for him.

What was she doing? Not a movement, not a stir, not a breath, not a sigh, revealed the presence of a human being behind that door. Had she fled? But how? If she had fled, she must have leaped from the window into the street.

A start of terror seized him, so sudden and so imperious that he burst open, rather than opened, the door, and rushed into his bedroom.

It seemed empty. A single candle on the dressing table lighted it.

Jean dashed to the window: it was fastened, and the shutters closed. He returned and scrutinized with anxious looks all the dark corners. He saw that the bed curtains were drawn; he ran and opened them. His mother was stretched on the couch, her face buried in the pillow, which she drew over her ears in order to hear no more.

At first he thought she was suffocated; then, taking her by the shoulders, he turned her round, without her ever letting go of the pillow which hid her face, and which she bit to keep from crying aloud.

But the touch of this stiffened body and of those arms clasping the pillow conveyed to him the shock of her unspeakable anguish. The energy and force with which she held, by hands and teeth, the feather pillow over her mouth, her ears, and her eyes, that he might not see her or speak to her, made him understand by sympathy to what point it is possible to suffer. [His heart, his simple heart, was torn with pity. He was not a judge, not even a compassionate judge: he was a man full of weakness, and a son full of tenderness. He recalled nothing the other had said, he did not argue, he



did not discuss; he simply touched with his two hands the inert body of his mother, and, as he could not pull the pillow from her face, he cried, as he kissed her dress:

“Mamma, mamma, my poor mamma! Look at me!”

She would have seemed lifeless, if an almost imperceptible shiver, a vibration as of a stretched cord, had not quivered through all her limbs. He repeated:

“Mamma, mamma, listen to me. It is not true. I am sure it is not true.”

A spasm of suffocation was followed by sudden sobs in the pillow. Then all her nerves relaxed, the rigid muscles became pliant, the fingers unclasped and let go the pillow, and Jean raised it from her face.

She was very pale, very white, and tears were falling from her closed eyelids. Throwing his arms round her neck, he kissed her eyes with long, tender kisses that were moistened with her tears, and kept saying:

“Mamma, dear mamma, I am sure it is not true. Don’t cry. I know it is not true.”

She rose and sat up; she looked at him, and with one of those efforts of courage which are required, in certain cases, in order to kill one’s self, she said to him:

“No: it is true, my child!”

They remained in silence, face to face. For some moments she still seemed suffocating, stretching her neck, and throwing back her head to breathe. At length she mastered herself and resumed:

“It is true, my child. Why tell a lie? It is true. You would not believe me if I did lie.”

She looked like a madwoman. Overcome with terror, he fell on his knees beside the bed.

“ Oh, be still, mamma, be still! ”

She rose up with appalling resolution and energy.

“ I have nothing more to tell you, my child. Farewell! ”

And she walked toward the door. He seized her with both arms, crying:

“ What are you doing, mamma? Where are you going? ”

“ I do not know. How can I know? I have nothing more to do, for I am all alone. ”

She struggled to escape; and he, still holding her, could find only one word to say, over and over again:

“ Mamma, mamma, mamma! ”

In the midst of her efforts to break from his clasp, she said:

“ No, no, I am no more your mother! I am nothing more to you, nor to any one, nothing more, nothing more! You have no longer father or mother, my poor child! Farewell! ”

He understood now that if he let her go he would never see her again: so, lifting her in his arms, he carried her to an armchair, and forced her to sit there. Then, kneeling, and forming a chain around her with his arms, he said:

“ You shall not leave here, mamma. I love you and will keep you with me. I will keep you always. You belong to me! ”

In a low, weak voice she replied:

“ No, my poor child. that is not possible. This evening you weep: to-morrow you would turn me out. You would not pardon me, either. ”

He answered with such an outburst of sincere love: "What, I? How little you know me!" that she gave a cry, took his head by the hair with both hands, pulled him toward her, and kissed his face wildly.

Then she remained motionless, her cheek against her son's cheek, feeling through his thick beard the warmth of his young life, and said, low in his ear:

"No, my little Jean. You would not pardon me to-morrow. You think so, and you are mistaken. You have pardoned me this evening, and that pardon has saved my life; but you must not see me again."

He repeated, clasping her tighter:

"Mamma, do not say that!"

"Yes, little one, I must go away. I do not know when, nor how I shall act, nor what I shall say. But it must be so. I would not dare to look at you or embrace you any more. Do you understand?"

Then in his turn he said, low in her ear:

"Darling mother, you will remain because I wish it, and have need of you. And you must swear to obey me, at once."

"No, my child."

"Oh, mamma, you must! Do you hear? You must!"

"No, my child, it is impossible. It would condemn us all to hell. I know, I have known for a month, what that torture is. You are softened at this moment; but when it is past, when you look at me as Pierre does, when you recall what I have told you—— Oh, my little Jean—remember—remember that I am your mother!"

"You must not leave me, mamma. I have only you."

" But think, my son, we can never see each other again without blushing, both of us; without my feeling ready to die of shame, and without my eyes falling when you look at me."

" That is not true, mamma."

" Yes, yes, yes. It is true! Oh, I understand all the struggles of your poor brother, all of them, from the first day! Now, when I hear his step in the house, my heart leaps as if it would burst my breast; when I hear his voice, I feel as if I would faint. I had you still! You! Now I have you no longer. Oh, my little Jean, do you think I could live between you two? "

" Yes, mamma. I will love you so much that you will think of it no more."

" Oh, if that were possible! "

" It is possible! "

" How do you suppose I can forget it, with you and your brother here? Will neither of you think of it? "

" I will not, I swear! "

" You will think of it every hour of the day."

" No, I swear it. And then, listen, if you go away, I'll pick a quarrel and get myself killed."

She was distracted at the childish threat, and clasped Jean fondly, as she caressed him with passionate tenderness.

He continued:

" I love you more than you think, much more, much more. Come, be reasonable. Try to stay here only a week. Will you promise me a week? You cannot refuse me that! "

She laid her hands on Jean's shoulders, and holding him at arm's length:

" My child, let us be calm, and not be carried



away by emotion. Let me speak to you, in the first place. If I should hear, once only, from your lips what I have heard for a month from your brother's mouth; if I were, once only, to read in your eyes what I read in his; if I were to surmise, by a mere word, a mere look, that I am as hateful to you as to him—one hour afterward, you understand, one hour afterward, I would leave forever."

"Mamma, I swear to you . . ."

"Let me speak. For a month I have suffered all that can be suffered. From the moment when I comprehended that your brother, my other son, suspected me, and that he was, minute by minute, coming nearer to the truth, every moment of my life has been a martyrdom impossible to describe."

Her voice was so full of anguish that it brought tears to the eyes of Jean.

He attempted to kiss her, but she repulsed him.

"Let me alone. Listen—I have so much to tell you, to make you understand. But you will not understand—that is, if I should stay—I should have to—— No, I cannot!"

"Speak, mamma, speak!"

"I will, then. At least, I will not have deceived you. You want me to stay with you, do you not? For me to stay, for us to be able to see each other still, to speak to each other, to meet each other all day in the house—for I dare not now open a door for fear of finding your brother behind it—for all this, it is necessary not for you to pardon me—nothing hurts more than a pardon—but that you bear me no ill will for what I have done. You must feel yourself so strong, so different from all the world, as to say to yourself that you are not the son of Roland without blushing at the avowal and with-

out despising me. I have suffered enough—I have suffered too much. I can bear no more. No, I can bear no more. And I have suffered, not just lately, but for a long while. You will never be able to understand. In order that we may still live together, still kiss each other, my little Jean, say to yourself, that, even though it was an unlawful union, I was still more his wife, his true wife—I am not ashamed of it in my heart; I regret nothing; I still love him, dead as he is; that I shall love him always, that I loved none but him; that he was all my life, all my joy, all my hope, all my consolation, all, all, all to me, ah, for so long! Listen, little one. Before God, who hears me, I would have had nothing good in life, if I had not met him—nothing; never affection, never kindness, never one of those hours that make us so regret that we grow old—nothing! I owe to him everything. I had only him in the world, and then you two, your brother and you. Without you it would have been void, black and void as night. I would have loved nothing, known nothing, desired nothing—I would not have even wept; for I have wept, my little Jean—yes, I have wept since we came here. I gave myself to him, body and soul, forever, with happiness; and for ten years I was his wife, as he was my husband, before God, who made us for each other. And then I perceived that he loved me less. He was always good and thoughtful, but I was no longer to him what I had been. It was over. Oh, how I wept! What a wretched deceiver is life! Nothing lasts! And we came here, and I never saw him again; he never came here. He promised in all his letters—I always expected him—and I never saw him again—and now he is dead. But he still loved us, for he thought of you. As for

me, I shall love him to my last breath, and will never deny him; and I love you because you are his child, and I could not be ashamed of him before you. Do you understand? I could not! If you wish me to stay, you must accept the fact that you are his son, and we must talk of him sometimes, and you must love him a little, and we must think of him when we look at each other. If you will not, if you cannot do this, farewell, my little Jean, it is impossible for us to remain together. I will do as you decide."

Jean replied, in a gentle voice:

"Stay, mamma."

She clasped him in her arms, and began to weep afresh; then, cheek pressed to cheek, she resumed:

"Yes, but Pierre, what can we do with him?"

Jean whispered:

"We will find something. You cannot live in the same house with him any longer."

The remembrance of her eldest son shook her with anguish.

"No, I cannot, I cannot."

And, flinging herself on Jean's breast, she cried in distress of soul:

"Save me from him, save me, little Jean. Do something. I do not know—find—save me!"

"Yes, mamma; I will see about it."

"At once—you must—at once—do not leave me! I am in fear of him—such fear!"

"Yes, I will find something, I promise you."

"But quickly, quickly! You do not know how I feel when I see him."

Then she whispered low in his ear:

"Keep me here, at your rooms."

He hesitated, reflected, and with his positive

good sense comprehended the danger of such an arrangement.

But he had to reason with her for a long time, and to discuss and combat with definite arguments her terror and distraction.

"Only this evening," she said. "Only to-night. You can tell Roland to-morrow that I did not feel well."

"That is not possible, as Pierre went home. Come, take courage. I will arrange everything, after to-morrow, I promise you. I will be at the house at nine o'clock. Come, put on your bonnet; I will take you home."

"I will do as you wish," she said, with childish resignation, in timid gratitude.

She attempted to rise, but the shock had been too great—she could not yet stand up.

He gave her some water to drink and some salts to smell, and bathed her temples with vinegar.

At length she was able to walk, and took his arm. Three o'clock was striking when they passed the town hall.

At the door of their dwelling he kissed her and said, "Adieu, mamma. Courage!"

With furtive steps she mounted the silent stairs, reached her room, undressed rapidly, and, with the revived emotions of other days, crept into the bed where Roland was snoring.

Pierre alone in the house was not asleep, and heard her return.







## CHAPTER VIII

### PIERRE'S RESOLUTION



ON returning to his room, Jean flung himself on a couch; for the grief and anxiety which inspired in his brother a longing to run away, and fly like a hunted thing, had a different effect on his phlegmatic nature, and crippled his every limb. He felt himself weak beyond the power of movement, beyond the power of getting into bed; weak in body and soul, crushed and despairing. He was not, as Pierre was, stricken in the purity of his filial love, in that secret dignity in which proud spirits wrap themselves: he was overwhelmed by a stroke of fate, that at the same time menaced his dearest interests.

When at length his mind grew calm, when his thoughts had cleared themselves like troubled water, he faced the situation that had just been revealed to him. If he had learned the secret of his birth in

any other manner, he would assuredly have been indignant and experienced deep grief; but after his quarrel with his brother, and after the violent and brutal revelation that shook his nerves, the poignant emotion of his mother's confession left him without energy to revolt. The shock received by his sensitive nature had been strong enough to sweep away, in irresistible commiseration, all the prejudices and all the sacred susceptibilities of natural morality.

Besides, he was not a man made to resist. He did not like to struggle against any one, still less against himself, and therefore he became resigned; and then, by an instinctive inclination, an innate love of repose and of a pleasant, tranquil life, he began to be disquieted about the annoyances which would arise about and around him, and affect him at the same time. He saw that they were inevitable; and, to remove them, he resolved on superhuman efforts of energy and activity. It was necessary that the difficulty should be met at once, the very next day; for he had at times that imperious need of immediate action that constitutes all the strength of the weak, who are incapable of a protracted power of will. His lawyer's turn of mind, trained, besides, to disentangle and study complicated situations and questions of domestic order in disturbed households, at once discovered all the immediate consequences of his brother's state of mind. In spite of himself, he faced the results from a professional point of view, as if he were arranging the future relations of clients after some moral catastrophe.

Beyond question constant contact with Pierre was becoming impossible. He could easily avoid

him by remaining in his rooms, but it was impossible that their mother should continue to reside under the same roof as her elder son.

He meditated at length, as he lay motionless on the cushions, forming and rejecting plans, without finding anything to satisfy him.

Then suddenly this idea struck him: "Could an honorable man keep the fortune he had received?"

He was at first impelled to say, "No," and resolved to give it to some charity. It was hard, nevertheless. He would sell his furniture and work like any one else, as all have to work when beginning their career. This manly and painful determination roused his courage, and he rose and leaned his forehead against the window pane. He had been poor; he would be poor again. After all, it would not kill him. He looked at the gas lamp opposite, on the other side of the street. Then, as a belated woman passed by on the sidewalk, he suddenly thought of Madame Rosémilly, and felt a tightening of the heart. All the overwhelming consequences of his decision came to his mind. He would have to renounce his marriage with her, renounce happiness, renounce everything. Could he do this, now that he was engaged to her? She had accepted him with the knowledge that he was rich. If he were poor she would still accept him; but was he justified in asking her, in compelling her to this sacrifice? Would it not be better to keep this money as a trust, which he would later restore to the indigent?

In his soul, where egotism assumed the mask of probity, all these disguised interests struggled and fought. His first scruples gave way to ingen-



ious arguments, then came again to the front and were once more removed.

He sat down again, seeking some deciding motive, some all-powerful pretext, to remove his uncertainty and convince his inborn integrity. A score of times already had he asked himself the question: "Since I am this man's son, since I know it and accept the situation, is it not natural to accept also his legacy?" This argument, however, could not stifle the "No" whispered by his deepest conscience.

Then he suddenly thought: "Since I am not the son of him whom I thought my father, I can accept nothing from him, neither in his life nor after his death. It would be neither noble nor just; it would be robbing my brother."

This new way of looking at it quieted his conscience, and he went back to the window.

"Yes," he said to himself, "I must renounce the inheritance of my family. I must leave it whole and entire to Pierre, since I am not the son of his father. That is but just. Is it not just then, also, that I keep my own father's money?"

Recognizing the fact, then, that he could receive no benefit from Roland's fortune, having decided to relinquish it absolutely, he was willing and resigned himself to keep the fortune left by Maréchal; for, if he rejected both, he would find himself reduced to simple beggary.

This delicate affair being settled, he returned to the question of Pierre's presence in the family. How could he get rid of him? He was despairing of finding a practical solution, when the whistle of a steamer coming into port seemed to reply, by suggesting to him an idea.



With this thought he stretched himself upon his bed without undressing and dozed till daylight.

About nine o'clock he went out to see if he could carry out his project. After making some inquiries and a few calls, he betook himself to the house of his parents. His mother was waiting for him in her bedroom.

"If you had not come," she said, "I would never have dared to go down."

Roland was soon heard calling on the stairs:

"Nothing to eat to-day, eh? Confound it!"

There was no reply, so he roared:

"Joséphine, confound it all! what are you about?"

The girl's voice came up from the basement:

"What is it, sir?"

"Where's your mistress?"

"She is upstairs with Monsieur Jean."

He raised his head toward the upper story, and shouted:

"Louise!"

Madame Roland opened the door, and replied:



“ Well? ”

“ Are we to have nothing to eat? Confound it! ”

“ We are coming, my dear. ”

She descended, and Jean followed.

Roland, when he saw the young man, cried:

“ Ah, there you are! You are already tired of your lodgings. ”

“ No, father, but I wanted to chat with mamma this morning. ”

Jean advanced with outstretched hand, and when his fingers felt the paternal grasp of the old man, a strange, unforeseen emotion wrung his heart at the thought of a lasting separation and farewell.

Madame Roland inquired:

“ Has not Pierre come? ”

Her husband shrugged his shoulders.

“ No, but never mind; he is always late. Let us begin without him. ”

She turned to Jean.

“ You ought to go and look for him, my child. It hurts him when we do not wait for him. ”

The young man left the room. He mounted the stairs with the feverish resolution of a timid man who is going to fight a duel.

He knocked at the door. Pierre replied:

“ Come in! ”

He entered the room.

His brother was bending over the table and writing.

“ Good morning, ” said Jean.

Pierre rose.

“ Good morning. ”

And they shook hands as if nothing had happened.

“ Are you not coming down to breakfast? ”

"Well, the fact is, I have a great deal to do."

The voice of the older brother trembled, and his anxious eye asked the younger one what he was going to do.

"They are waiting for you."

"Oh, is—is our mother down there?"

"Yes. She herself sent me to look for you."

"Then I'll come down."

He hesitated at the dining-room door as to whether he should enter first. Then he opened it with a jerk, and saw his father and mother seated at table, opposite each other.

He went up to her without raising his eyes or pronouncing a word, and, bending toward her, offered her his forehead to kiss as he had done for some time past, instead of kissing her on the cheek as he did formerly. He guessed that her lips approached him, but he did not feel them on his forehead, and he straightened himself up with beating heart after this ghost of a kiss.

He asked himself: "What did they say after I left?"

Jean affectionately repeated the words "mother" and "dear mamma," and paid her great attention, handing her dishes and pouring out her wine. Pierre then understood that they had wept together, but he could not penetrate their thoughts. Did Jean believe his mother guilty, or his brother a scoundrel?

All the reproaches which he had heaped on himself for having uttered the horrible charge assailed him afresh, choking his throat, closing his mouth, and preventing him from eating or speaking.

He was overcome, at this moment, by an intolerable desire to flee, to leave this house which was no

longer his, and these people who were bound to him now only by imperceptible bonds. He would have liked to go away at once, no matter where; for he felt that it was all over—that he could no longer remain among them, that he would torture them always, in spite of himself, by his mere presence, and that they would cause him intolerable suffering.

Jean was chatting with Roland, but Pierre was not listening, did not hear what they said. He fancied, however, that there was a meaning in his brother's tones, and he began to pay attention.

Jean said:

“It will be, it seems, the finest boat in their fleet. They say six thousand five hundred tons. It will make its first voyage next month.”

Roland exclaimed in surprise:

“So soon! I thought she would not be fit to go to sea this summer.”

“You are mistaken. The work has been pushed so vigorously that the first trip will take place before the fall. I was at the company's office this morning, and spoke to one of the managers.”

“Which of them?”

“Monsieur Marchand, a particular friend of the president of the board of directors.”

“Why, do you know him?”

“Yes. And I had a slight favor to ask.”

“Ah! Then you will take me over the *Lorraine* when she comes into harbor, won't you?”

“Certainly. Nothing easier.”

Jean seemed to hesitate, pick his phrases, and change his subjects inexplicably. He continued:

“In brief, life on board these great Atlantic steamers is very pleasant. More than half of the



month is spent ashore in two superb cities, New York and Havre, and the rest afloat with charming people. Very agreeable acquaintances can be made there, and very useful ones, too—very useful later on—among the passengers. Only imagine, the captain, if he is economical with his coal, can make twenty-five thousand francs a year, if not more.”

“Phew!” exclaimed Roland, with a long whistle that bore witness to a profound respect for the sum and the captain.

Jean resumed:

“The purser may make ten thousand, and the doctor gets five thousand, fixed salary, with board, lodging, lights, heat, attendance, etc., etc. This is equal to ten thousand, at least. A good berth.”

Pierre, who had raised his eyes, met those of his brother and understood him.

He asked, after a little hesitation:

“Is it difficult to obtain a place as doctor on one of these steamers?”

“Yes and no. It all depends on circumstances and influence.”

There was a long silence, then the doctor spoke again:

“Is it next week that the *Lorraine* sails?”

“Yes; the seventh.”

They were again silent.

Pierre was thinking. It would certainly be a solution of the difficulty if he could go as a doctor on this steamer. Later, he would see—he might leave, perhaps. Meanwhile, he would be earning his living without asking anything from his family. He had been forced, the night before, to sell his watch, for now he never asked his mother for money. This, then, was his last resort, his only

means of a livelihood, except eating the bread of a home that he could no longer live in. So he said, hesitating a little:

"If I could manage it I should be very glad to sail on board of her."

"Why cannot you?" asked Jean.

"Because I know no one in the Transatlantic Company."

Roland, in astonishment, asked:

"And all your fine projects of success—what is to become of them?"

Pierre replied:

"There are times when we must learn to sacrifice everything, and renounce our dearest hopes. Besides, this is only a beginning, a means of amassing a few thousand francs to get a start with."

The father was soon convinced.

"That's true. In two years you can lay aside six or seven thousand francs, which, if well invested, will be a great help. What do you think, Louise?"

"I think Pierre is right."

Roland exclaimed:

"I'll go and speak to Monsieur Poulin, whom I know very well. He is the judge of the Tribunal of Commerce, and is acquainted with the affairs of the company. I know also Monsieur Lenient, the shipbuilder, who is a great friend of one of the vice presidents."

Jean asked his brother:

"Would you like me to sound Monsieur Marchand to-day?"

"Yes, I would."

Then, after reflecting for some instants, Pierre resumed:

"The best way would be, perhaps, to write to

my teachers and professors in the medical college, who thought very highly of me. The doctors of these steamboats are often second class. Good, strong letters from Professors Mas-Roussel, Rémusot, Flache, and Borriquel would be of more service to me than any number of doubtful recommendations. It would be only necessary to present these letters through your friend M. Marchand to the board of directors."

Jean expressed his approval.

"A very good idea, very good, indeed;" and he smiled as if reassured, almost happy, and sure of success, for he was incapable of tormenting himself long about anything.

"You will write to them to-day?" he said.

"At once, immediately. I'll go and do it. I won't take any coffee this morning, I am too nervous."

He rose and left the room.

Then Jean turned to his mother:

"Mamma, what are you going to do to-day?"

"Nothing. I do not know."

"Will you come with me to Madame Rosémilly's?"

"Why, yes—yes——"

"You know it is necessary that I should go there to-day."

"Yes—that is true."

"But why necessary?" asked M. Roland, who, as a rule, never understood what was being said.

"Because I promised to call there."

"That's all. That makes a difference."

And he began to fill his pipe, while the mother and son went upstairs to get their hats.

When they were in the street, Jean said:

"Will you take my arm, mamma?"

He was not in the habit of offering it to her, for they usually walked side by side. She took it and leaned on him.

For some time they did not speak, then he said:

"You see that Pierre is quite willing to go away."

She replied:

"Poor boy!"

"Poor boy—why so? He will not be so badly off at all when he is on the *Lorraine*."

"No—I know—but I am thinking of so many things."

She kept on thinking, with her head bent, and keeping step with her son; and then, with that peculiar tone that our voice assumes sometimes when we utter the result of a long secret train of thought, she exclaimed:

"What a horrible thing life is! If by chance we find a moment of happiness in it, it is a sin to enjoy it, and one has to pay very dear for it afterward."

He said in a low tone:

"Don't talk of it, mamma."

"How can I help talking of it? I am thinking of it all the time."

"You will forget."

She was silent once more, and then, with an expression of profound regret, she continued:

"Oh, how happy I could have been if I had married another man!"

At the present moment she was exasperated against Roland, and attributed to his homeliness, his stupidity, his awkwardness, his lack of intellect, to his vulgar appearance, all the responsibility of



her mistake and her unhappiness. It was this, the vulgarity of the man, that caused her to be untrue to him, that made her drive one of her sons to despair, and that obliged her to make to the other the most painful confession that could be wrung from a mother's heart.

She continued:

“It is frightful for a young girl to marry a husband like mine.”

Jean made no reply. He was thinking of the man whose son he had hitherto believed he was; and, perhaps, the confused notion which he had entertained, for some time, of that man's commonplace character, the persistent irony of his brother, the disdainful indifference of others, and even the contempt of the servant girl for Roland, had prepared his mind for the terrible avowal of his mother. He did not mind so much being the son of another man; and after the terrible shock of emotion of the day before, if he did not display the revolt, the indignation, and the anger which Madame Roland dreaded, the reason was that for a long time he had been unconsciously suffering from the feeling of being the child of this good-natured fool.

They were now in front of the house of Madame Rosémilly.

She lived on the road to Saint Adresse, on the second floor of a large house that belonged to her. The windows looked out on the whole roadstead of Havre.

When she saw Madame Roland, who was the first to enter, instead of extending her hand as usual, she opened her arms and embraced her, for she guessed the object of her visit.

The furniture of the room, in stamped velvet, was always covered with chintz; and on the walls, prepared in flower designs, were four engravings bought by her first husband, the captain. They represented marine and sentimental scenes. In the first, a fisherman's wife was waving a handkerchief on the shore, while the sails of a boat bearing away her husband disappeared on the horizon. In the second, the same woman, on her knees, on the same shore, was wringing her hands as she beheld in the distance her husband's boat foundering in an ocean of impossible waves, and beneath a sky in which the lightning flashed.

The two other engravings represented analogous scenes in a higher class of society.

A young fair-haired woman, leaning in a reverie over the rail of a large mail steamer, just sailing away: she looks at the already distant shore with an eye wet with tears of regret.

Whom has she left behind her?

Then the same young woman, seated near a window looking out on the ocean, has fainted in an armchair; a letter has just fallen from her lap to the carpet.

He is dead, then! What despair!

Visitors, generally, were very much touched by the commonplace melancholy of these apparent and sentimental subjects.

The chairs were placed in regular order, some against the wall, some around the center table. The white, immaculate curtains had folds so straight and so regular that one would have liked to disarrange them a little; and never a single grain of dust tarnished the gilded clock in the style of the Empire, where a globe of the world on the back

of a kneeling Atlas seemed to be ripening like a hot-house melon.

The two ladies, as they took their seats, slightly disarranged the normal position of the chairs.

"Have you been out to-day?" Madame Roland inquired.

"No. I confess I am rather tired."

And then, as if to thank Jean and his mother, she told how much she had enjoyed their excursion and the fishing party.

"Why," she said, "I ate my prawns this morning and they were delicious. If you like, we will repeat that excursion some other day."

The young man interrupted:

"Before commencing a second, had we not better finish the first?"

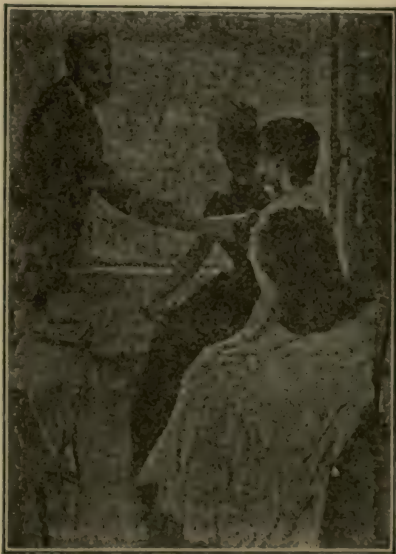
"How do you mean? It seems to me it is finished already."

"Ah, Madame, for my part, I landed a fish on the rocks of Saint Jouin, which I want to take home."

She assumed a sly, knowing look.

"You? What is it? What did you catch?"

"A woman! and we have come, mamma and myself, to ask if she has not changed her mind."



She replied with a smile:

“No, Monsieur; I never change my mind.”

He extended to her his wide-open hand, and she placed hers in it with a decided, resolute gesture; then he asked:

“As soon as possible, eh?”

“Whenever you like.”

“Six weeks?”

“It’s all the same to me. What does my future mother-in-law think?”

Madame Roland replied, with a somewhat melancholy smile:

“As for me, I say nothing. I only thank you for loving Jean, for you will make him very happy.”

“We will do what we can, mamma.”

Somewhat touched for the first time, Madame Rosémilly arose, and, flinging both arms around Madame Roland, she gave her a long embrace as though she were a child; and under the pressure of this new caress a powerful emotion filled the aching heart of the poor woman. She could not say what her feelings were; they were at once sad and sweet: she had lost a son and was gaining a daughter.

When they had taken their seats again and were face to face, they took each other’s hand and remained thus looking at each other, and smiling, while Jean seemed to be almost forgotten by them.

Then they talked of a number of things which had to be thought about for the approaching marriage, and when all was arranged and decided, Madame Rosémilly appeared suddenly to remember a trifling detail, and asked:

“You have consulted Monsieur Roland, I suppose?”



The same blush at once covered the cheeks of mother and son; it was the mother who answered.

“ Oh, no! what is the use of it? ”

Then she hesitated, for she felt that some explanation was necessary, and continued:

“ We do everything without saying anything to him about it. It is enough to tell him what we have decided.”

Madame Rosémilly smiled; she was by no means surprised, for it seemed quite natural as the old gentleman was of little account.

When Madame Roland and her son were again in the street, the former said:

“ Let us go to your rooms: I should like to rest a while.”

She felt herself without shelter, without refuge, and with a horror of her home.

They entered Jean's apartments. As soon as she saw the door shut behind her, she gave a great sigh, as if the very turning of the lock had placed her in security; then, instead of resting herself, as she had intended, she began to open the wardrobes and count the piles of linen, the number of pocket-handkerchiefs and of stockings. She changed the usual order, seeking to arrange them in a manner more pleasing to her housewifely eye; and when she had disposed the linen, she drew back to contemplate her work, and said:

“ Jean, come and see how pretty this is.”

He rose and expressed his admiration for the purpose of gratifying her.

When he had resumed his seat, she suddenly stepped up lightly behind his armchair, and, throwing her right arm around his neck, she kissed him, while she placed on the mantelpiece a little package

wrapped in white paper which she held in her other hand.

He asked:

“What is that?”

As she made no reply, he understood, for he recognized the shape of the frame.

“Give it to me,” he said.

But she pretended not to hear him, and went back to the wardrobe. He rose and, eagerly seizing this melancholy relic, he crossed the room, and double-locked it in a drawer of his desk. His mother wiped away a tear that trembled on her eyelids, and said in a rather tremulous voice:

“Now I am going to see if your new servant keeps her kitchen in good order. As she is out just now I can inspect everything.”



## CHAPTER IX

### THE LAST FAREWELL



LETTERS of recommendation from Professors Mas-Roussel, Rémusot, Flache, and Borriquel, which spoke in most flattering terms of their pupil, Dr. Pierre Roland, were submitted by M. Marchand to the Transatlantic Company, and indorsed by MM. Poulin of the Tribunal of Commerce, Lenient, shipbuilder, and Marival, assessor to the mayor of Havre and a great friend of Captain Beausire.

It was ascertained that the surgeon of the *Lorraine* was not yet appointed, and Pierre had a chance of being nominated in a few days.

The notification of his appointment was handed him by the maid Joséphine, one morning, as he was finishing his toilet.

His first emotion was that of a prisoner under sentence of death who receives a commutation of his sentence; and he at once felt his suffering assuaged somewhat by the thought of his departure,

and of his calm life on board, rocked by the rolling waves, always roaming, always wandering.

He was now living in his father's house like a stranger, silent and reserved. Since the evening when he had allowed the shameful secret discovered by him to escape him in presence of his brother, he felt that he had broken the last ties that bound him to his kin. He was torn with remorse at having told it to Jean; he looked on himself as despicable, mean, and malicious, and yet he felt some comfort in having spoken.

His eyes never met those of his mother or of his brother. The eyes of all of them had assumed, to avoid meeting each other, a surprising mobility, and artifices like those of enemies who fear to cross each other's path. He was always asking himself: "What can she have said to Jean? Did she confess or deny? What does my brother believe? What does he think of her? What does he think of me?" He could not imagine, and that exasperated him. Besides, he scarcely spoke to them, except in Roland's presence, so as to avoid questions.

When he received the letter notifying him of his appointment, he showed it at once to his family. His father, who was very readily pleased at everything, clapped his hands. Jean replied in a serious tone, but with a heart full of joy:

"I congratulate you heartily, for I know there were many applicants. You owe it certainly to the letters from your professors."

His mother bent her head, and in a low tone said:

"I am very glad you have succeeded."

After dinner he went to the company's offices, to obtain information about many matters, and



asked the name of the surgeon of the *Picardie*, that was to sail the next day, in order that he might inquire about all the details of his new life, and the special conditions he would have to meet.

As Dr. Pirette was on board, he went to his room, a little steamer cabin, and was received by a young man with a light beard, who looked like his brother. They had a long conversation.

In the sonorous depths of the huge ship, a confused, ceaseless disturbance was going on in which the letting down of merchandise into the hold was blended with the sound of steps, with voices, with the movement of the derricks hoisting in the cargo, with the whistles of the boatswains, with the clang of chains dragging along the decks or wound on the capstan, with the hoarse puffing of the engine, which set up a slight vibration in the whole mass of the great vessel.

But when Pierre had quitted his colleague and found himself in the street, a new melancholy fell on him, and enveloped him, like those fogs that sweep across the sea, coming from the ends of the earth, and bearing in their impalpable density something mysterious and impure, like a pestilential breath from distant and unhealthy shores.

Never, in the hours of his greatest suffering, had he found himself plunged into such a cesspool of misery. The last tie had been broken; he no longer cared for anything. In tearing from his heart the roots of all his affections, he had not until now felt that distress as of a lost dog which suddenly seized him.

It was no longer a moral and torturing pang: it was the wild despair of a shelterless beast, the material anguish of a vagabond creature who no

longer has a roof, and whom rain, wind, storm, all the brute forces of the world are about to attack. As he set his foot on the steamer and entered the little cabin tossing on the waves, the very flesh of the man who had always slept in a quiet, motionless bed revolted against the insecurity of all his future days. Hitherto, he had felt himself protected by solid walls set in earth, and by the certainty of always sleeping in the same place, beneath a roof that resisted the winds. Now, everything that can endure in the warmth of a solid house would be a danger and a perpetual suffering.

No ground beneath his feet; only the sea that heaves, and roars, and engulfs. No space around him, in which to walk, run, lose his way; only a few feet of plank to walk on like a criminal in the midst of other prisoners. No trees, gardens, streets, houses; nothing but water and sky. And then he would feel, unceasingly, the movement of the ship beneath his feet. In stormy weather he would have to lean against the partitions, or cling to the doors, or hang on to the edge of his narrow berth, to avoid falling. In calm weather he would hear the whirling noise of the screw, and feel the ship flying along, bearing him with it in its regular, exasperating flight.

He found himself condemned to this life of a wandering convict, solely because his mother had yielded to a moment's weakness.

He walked straight before him, overcome, for the moment, by the despairing melancholy of those who are going to expatriate themselves.

He no longer felt in his heart his haughty contempt or disdainful hate of unknown passers-by, but a sad longing to speak to them, to tell them that

he was going to leave France, and to be listened to and consoled. In his bosom there was a need, like that of the shame-faced mendicant who holds out his hand—a timid yet strong need of feeling that some one was sorry for his departure.

He thought of Marowsko. The old Pole was the only one who loved him well enough to feel a true, deep emotion, and the doctor resolved to call on him at once.

When he entered the shop, the druggist, who was pounding some powders in the bottom of a marble mortar, gave a slight start and quitted his work.

“We never see you now,” he said.

The young man explained that he had numerous affairs to look after, without betraying the reason, and took his seat, asking:

“Well, how is business?”

Business was not prosperous. Competition was terrible, sick folks scarce and poor in that working-man’s quarter. There was no sale except for cheap medicines, and the doctors did not prescribe those rare and complex remedies that give a profit of five hundred per cent. The old fellow concluded:

“If it lasts three months longer like this, I must shut up shop. If I had not you to depend on, my dear doctor, I would have turned bootblack before this.”

Pierre felt his heart contract, and he decided to strike the blow abruptly, as it had to be done.

“Oh, on me. . . . I can no longer be of any assistance to you. I leave Havre at the beginning of next month.”

Marowsko took off his glasses, so great was his emotion, and cried:

“You—you! What’s that you say!”



“ I say I am going away, my poor friend.”

The old man was stunned; he felt his last hope crumble; and he took a sudden dislike to this man, whom he had followed, and loved, and in whom he had had such confidence, and who deserted him in this way.

He stammered out:

“ You are not going to betray me in your turn, are you? ”

Pierre felt himself so moved that he longed to embrace him.

“ I am not betraying you. I could not find a good place to establish a practice here, and I am going as a doctor on a transatlantic steamer.”

“ Oh, Monsieur Pierre, you promised faithfully to help me along in life! ”

“ What would you have? I must live myself; I have not a sou! ”

Marowsko repeated:

“ It is wrong, it is wrong—what you are going to do. Nothing now for me but to die of hunger. At my age, it is all over. It is wrong. You abandon a poor old man who came here to be near you. It is wrong.”

Pierre wished to explain, give his reasons, and prove that he could not act otherwise. The Pole would not listen, in his indignation at such desertion, and ended by saying, with an allusion, beyond question, to certain political events:

“ You Frenchmen never keep your word! ”

Then Pierre rose, annoyed in turn, and, taking a higher tone, said:

“ You are unjust, Monsieur Marowsko. It required powerful motives to make me adopt the decision I have made, and you ought to understand that.



Good day. I hope that next time I shall find you more reasonable."

He left the shop.

"Well," he thought, "no one will regret me sincerely."

He thought over carefully all the people he knew or had known; and, in the midst of all the faces that flitted across his memory, there stood out the face of the girl in the beer shop, who had caused him to suspect his mother.

He hesitated, for he nursed an instinctive grudge against her; then, by a sudden change of thought, "She was right, after all," he decided, and set out to find the street where she lived.

The beer shop was, as it happened, full of people and full of smoke. The customers—shopkeepers and workingmen, for it was a holiday—were shouting, laughing, calling for beer; and the landlord himself was serving them, running from table to table, carrying off the empty glasses, and bringing them back foaming.

When Pierre found a place, not far from the desk, he waited, hoping that the girl would see and recognize him.

She, however, passed and repassed in front of him, without a glance, trotting about with a little coquettish swing of her skirts.

At last he knocked on the table with a coin. She came up.

"What do you wish, sir?"

She did not look at him; her mind was lost in calculating the glasses that she had served.

"Is that the way to say 'Good day' to one's friends?" he said.

She turned her eyes on him, and said hurriedly:

" Oh, it is you! You look well. But I have no time to-day. Do you want beer? "

" Yes, a ' bock. ' "

When she brought it, he resumed:

" I came to say good-by; I am going away. "

She replied with indifference:

" Oh, pshaw! Where are you going? "

" To America. "

" They say it's a fine country. "

Not a word more. He must indeed have been foolish to speak to her on such a day. There were too many people in the place.

Pierre walked toward the sea. When he reached the pier, he saw the *Pearl* coming in, with his father and Captain Beausire on board. The sailor, Papagris, was rowing, and the two others, sitting in the stern, smoked their pipes with an air of perfect happiness. As he saw them pass, he thought: " Blessed are the simple in spirit. "

He seated himself on one of the benches of the breakwater, to try to benumb himself into an animal-like somnolence.

When he returned home in the evening, his mother, without daring to raise her eyes to him, said:

" You will need to get a great many things before you start, and I am rather perplexed. I ordered your body linen, and have seen the tailor about your clothes; but is there anything else you need, things I do not know anything about, perhaps? "

He opened his lips to say " No, nothing, " but he reflected that he must, at least, accept enough to dress himself decently, and replied, in a very calm tone:

“ I do not know yet myself. I will ask at the office.”

He obtained there a list of indispensable articles. His mother, on receiving it from his hands, looked at him, for the first time in a long while, and her eyes had the humble, soft, sad, appealing expression of a poor dog that has been whipped and is begging pardon.

On the first of October, the *Lorraine*, sailing from Saint Nazaire, entered the port of Havre, to sail on the seventh of the same month for her destination of New York. Pierre Roland had to take possession of the little floating cabin in which henceforth his life would be imprisoned.

The following day as he was going out he met his mother on the stairs; she was waiting for him, and said in an almost unintelligible voice:

“ Do you not want me to help you in arranging your room on the boat? ”

“ No, thanks; everything is done.”

“ I want so much to see your cabin,” she murmured.

“ It is not worth the trouble. It is very ugly and very small.”

He went on, leaving her stunned, leaning against the wall, with her face deathly pale.

Now, Roland, who had visited the *Lorraine* that very same day, talked during dinner of nothing but that magnificent ship, and was much astonished that his wife had no desire to see it, since their son was to sail in it.

Pierre was scarcely at home at all for the next few days. He was nervous, irritable, harsh, and his brutal remarks seemed to hit every one. But on the evening before his departure he suddenly

appeared very much changed and softened. As he was embracing his parents before going to sleep on board for the first time, he said:

“ You will come and say ‘ Good-by ’ to me to-morrow, at the ship? ”

Roland cried:

“ Yes, yes, by Jove! Won’t we, Louise? ”

“ Certainly,” she said, in a low voice.

Pierre continued:

“ We leave at eleven, sharp. You must be down there at half-past nine, at the latest.”

“ Hello! ” cried the father: “ here’s an idea. When we leave you, we will run as fast as we can and go aboard the *Pearl*, and wait for you outside the harbor, and get another sight of you. Shall we do that, Louise? ”

“ Yes, certainly.”

Roland went on:

“ In this way you will not lose sight of us in the crowd that covers the pier when the transatlantic liners sail. One can never find one’s friends in the throng. Does that suit you? ”

“ Oh, yes. Let us arrange it so.”

An hour later Pierre was stretched on his little sailor’s bed, long and narrow as a coffin. He lay a long time with his eyes open, thinking of all that had passed during the last two months in his life, and, above all, in his soul. Through having suffered and made others suffer, his aggressive and vengeful grief had worn itself out, like a foaming wave. He had scarcely the courage to be angry with any one, for any cause whatever; he let his indignation drift, like his life. He felt so weary of struggling, weary of smiting, weary of hating, weary of everything, that he could bear it no longer,



and he sought to numb his heart into forgetfulness, as when one falls asleep. He heard, vaguely, around him the strange sounds of the ship—slight sounds, scarcely perceptible in that calm night in the harbor—and in the wound in his heart hitherto so agonizing he felt only a painful tingling as of a scar that was healing.

He slept profoundly till he was awakened by the movements of the sailors. It was daylight, and the tidal train with the passengers from Paris arrived at the quay.

Then he wandered about the ship, among the busy, restless crowd of people looking for their cabins, calling to each other, questioning and answering one another, in all the bewilderment of the beginning of a voyage. After a salute to the captain, and a shake of the hand to his comrade the purser, he entered the cabin, where some Englishmen were already dozing in the corners. The large room, with its walls of white marble with gold borders, appeared still larger as it was reflected with its long tables flanked by two unlimited lines of revolving chairs covered with crimson velvet. This, then, was the vast floating cosmopolitan hall, where the rich people of every continent had to dine in common. Its opulent luxury was that of large hotels, theaters, public places—a luxury that was commonplace and self-asserting, which satisfied the eyes of millionaires. The doctor was about to enter the second cabin, when he remembered that on the previous evening a great horde of emigrants had embarked: so he went to the lower deck. When he entered there, he was struck by a nauseating stench of poor dirty humanity; the odor of human flesh, more sickening than that of the hair or wool

of beasts. There, in a sort of low, dark tunnel, like the galleries in mines, he saw hundreds of men, women, and children stretched on planks, tier above tier, or groveling in heaps on the floor. He could not distinguish faces, but he dimly saw this filthy crowd in rags, this crowd of wretched men conquered by life, exhausted, crushed down—starting with an emaciated wife and half-starved children, for an unknown country, where they hoped not to die of hunger, perhaps.

As he thought of the past toil, the wasted toil, the barren efforts, the bitter strife renewed each day in vain, the energy spent by these beggars who were going to begin again, they did not know where, this existence of horrible wretchedness, the doctor felt a desire to cry out to them, “ Dump yourselves into the sea, with your women and your little ones! ” and his heart was so wrung by pity that he walked away, unable to bear the sight.

His father, his mother, his brother, and Madame Rosémilly were already waiting for him in his cabin.

“ So soon? ” he said.

“ Yes,” replied Madame Roland, with a trembling voice; “ we wished to have time to see you a little.”

He looked at her. She was in black as if in mourning, and he suddenly perceived that her hair, that was merely gray the month before, had now become quite white.

He could with difficulty seat the four visitors in his little room, and he himself got up on his bunk. Through the open door they saw a crowd as numerous as that in the streets on a holiday; for all the friends of the passengers, and an army of mere

sightseers, had invaded the huge liner. They walked along the corridors, through the saloons, everywhere, and some heads were poked into the room, while voices outside muttered, "That's the doctor's room."

Then Pierre closed the door; but when he found himself shut up with his friends he longed to open it again, for the movement on the ship concealed their constraint and their silence.

At length Madame Rosémilly determined to speak.

"Very little air comes through these small windows."

"It is a port-hole," said Pierre.

He pointed out the thickness of the glass that rendered it capable of resisting the most violent shocks, and then he explained at length the method of closing it. Roland next asked:

"Do you keep your medicines here?"

The doctor opened a locker, and showed them a row of phials that bore labels with Latin names.

He took one down and enumerated the properties of its contents; then a second, then a third, and delivered a lecture on therapeutics which seemed to be listened to with great attention.

Roland shook his head, repeating:

"Is it not interesting?"

A gentle knock at the door was heard.

"Come in," cried Pierre.

And Captain Beausire appeared.

He said, as he held out his hand:

"I am late in coming, because I did not want to disturb the family leave-taking."

He, too, had to sit on the bunk. Then the silence recommenced.

Suddenly, however, Captain Beausire pricked up his ears. Some order had reached him through the partition, and he remarked:

"It is time for us to go if we want to get on board the *Pearl* and see you again as you come out, and say 'Good-by' in the open sea."

Roland made a great point of doing this, doubtless with a view to impress the passengers on the *Lorraine*, and rose hurriedly.

"Come, good-by, my boy."

He kissed Pierre's whiskers, and then opened the door.

Madame Roland did not stir, and remained with downcast eyes and very pale face.

Her husband touched her on the arm.

"Come, let us be off. We have not a moment to lose."

She stood up, took a step toward her son, and held out to him, one after the other, two cheeks as white as wax, which he kissed without saying a word. Then he shook Madame Rosémilly's hand and his brother's, asking him:

"When is the wedding to be?"

"I do not yet know precisely. We will make it fit in with one of your voyages."

Finally they all left the room, and went up to the deck, which was encumbered with the public and porters and sailors.

The steam was roaring in the enormous belly of the ship, which seemed to tremble with impatience.

"Good-by," said Roland, hurriedly.

"Good-by," replied Pierre, standing at the top of one of the little wooden gangways leading from the *Lorraine* to the quay.



He again shook all their hands, and his family departed.

"Quick, quick, into the carriage!" cried old Roland.

A cab was waiting for them, and took them to the outer harbor, where Papagris had the *Pearl* all ready to put off.

There was not a breath of air; it was one of those calm, dry days of autumn, when the smooth sea seems cold and hard as steel.

Jean seized an oar, the sailor flung the other into the rowlocks, and they began to row. On the breakwaters, the piers, even on the granite breastworks, there was an innumerable crowd, jostling and noisy, waiting for the *Lorraine* to pass by.

The *Pearl* rowed out between these two billows of humanity, and was soon outside the dock.

Captain Beausire, seated between the two ladies, held the tiller, and said:

"You will see that we shall be directly in her course, down there."

The two rowers pulled with all their might to get out as far as possible. All at once Roland exclaimed:

"Here she is! I see her rigging and her two smokestacks. She is coming out of the basin."

"Pull, boys," repeated Beausire.

Madame Roland took her handkerchief from her pocket and held it to her eyes.

Roland was standing up and clinging to the mast.

"Now she is swinging into the outer harbor. She does not stir. She is in motion again. She has to take a tug. She is off! Hurrah! She is between the jetties. Don't you hear the people cheer-

ing her? It is the *Neptune* that is towing her—I see her bows just now. There she is—there she is! *Mon Dieu*, what a ship! Just look at her!”

Madame Rosémilly and Beausire turned round; the two men ceased to row; Madame Roland alone was motionless.

The huge vessel, towed by a powerful tugboat, which looked like a caterpillar before her, came slowly and royally out of the harbor. The good folk of Havre, massed on the piers, the beach, and at their windows, suddenly carried away with patriotic zeal, shouted, “*Vive la Lorraine!*” cheering and applauding her stately departure—this child of a great maritime city, that gave to the sea her fairest daughter.

But as soon as she had cleared the narrow passage between the two granite walls, and at length found herself free, she cast off her tug, and started alone, like some huge monster racing across the water.

“Here she comes! Here she comes!” Roland kept crying. “She is coming straight toward us.”

Beausire, radiant with delight, repeated:

“Did not I tell you so? Eh? Don’t I know their course?”

Jean, in a low voice, whispered to his mother:

“Mamma, look—she is coming.”

Madame Roland uncovered her eyes, that were blinded with her tears.

On came the *Lorraine*, at full speed after clearing the harbor, in the clear, calm, fine weather. Beausire, with his glass leveled, cried:

“Attention! Monsieur Pierre is at the stern, all alone, well in sight. Attention!”

The *Lorraine*, high as a mountain, swift as a

train, passed the *Pearl* almost within touching distance. Madame Roland, distracted and heart-broken, stretched out her arms toward the ship, and saw her son, her son Pierre, with his gold-laced cap, fling to her with both hands his farewell kisses.

But he went away in the distance, gradually vanishing and disappearing, until he was an imperceptible speck on the gigantic vessel. She tried to distinguish him still, and could not recognize him.

Jean took her hand.

"You saw him?" he said.

"Yes, I saw him. How good he is!"

They headed their boat toward the town.

"By Jove, she goes fast!" M. Roland declared with enthusiastic conviction.

The steamer, indeed, diminished moment by moment, as if it had melted away into the ocean. Madame Roland saw it plunge into the horizon toward an unknown country at the other end of the world. On that ship which nothing could stop, on that ship which soon she would no longer see, was her son, her poor boy. And it seemed to her that half of her heart went with him; it seemed to her, also, as if her life was ended; it seemed to her that never more would she behold her child.

"Why are you crying?" asked her husband.

"He will be back in less than a month."

She sobbed:

"I do not know. I cry because I am not well."

When they returned to land, Beausire left them at once to go and breakfast with a friend. Jean went on in front with Madame Rosémilly, and Roland said to his wife:

"He has a good figure, all the same, our Jean."

"Yes," replied the mother.

And, as she was too troubled in mind to think of what she was saying, she added:

"I am very glad he is going to marry Madame Rosémilly."

M. Roland was stupefied.

"Oh, pshaw! What? He is going to marry Madame Rosémilly?"

"Yes. We counted on asking your opinion this very day."

"Well, well! Is it long since this affair has been on hand?"

"No; only a few days. Jean wished to be sure of being accepted by her before consulting you."

Roland rubbed his hands.

"Excellent, excellent. Nothing could be better. I approve of it decidedly."

As they were about quitting the quay and taking the Boulevard François I, his wife turned once more to cast a last look at the open sea; but she saw nothing but a little gray trail of smoke, so distant, so slight, that it had the appearance of a wreath of mist.





## AN IDYL



HE train had just left Genoa for Marseilles, and was rumbling along the rocky coast, gliding like an iron serpent between the sea and the mountain, crawling over the beaches of yellow sand and disappearing suddenly into the black holes that indicate tunnels, like an animal crawling into its burrow.

In the last car of the train a large woman and a young man sat face to face without saying a word and looking at each other from time to time. She might have been twenty-five, and she sat near the door watching the scenery rush by. She was a stout peasant woman with black eyes, red cheeks, and voluminous breasts. She had pushed a few packages under the wooden bench and was holding a basket on her lap.

He looked to be about twenty, thin and tanned, with the dark complexion of men who work the earth

in the burning sunlight. Near him, in a handkerchief, was his whole fortune: a pair of shoes, a shirt, a pair of trousers, and a jacket. He also had pushed something under the bench: a pick and a spade tied together with a string. He was going to France to look for work.

The rising sun poured over the hills a torrent of fire; it was about the end of May, and the delicious fragrance of the earth floated everywhere and penetrated the open windows of the car. The lemon and orange blossoms filled the air with their sweet, strong, confusing perfume, mingling with that of the roses, growing like grass all along the roadbed, in beautiful gardens, before huts, and in the country.

This is the home of roses! They fill the country with their strong yet delicate aroma, and they make the air even more exhilarating than wine.

The train was going slowly, as if to linger in this delightful garden. It was continually stopping at every station, before a few white houses; then it would calmly start again after a long shrill whistle. Nobody got in. One might have thought that the whole world was asleep and could not decide itself to move on this warm spring morning.

From time to time the stout woman would close her eyes and then open them again suddenly just as her basket was slipping from her knees. She would catch it quickly, look outside for a few minutes, and then doze again. Beads of perspiration were standing on her forehead, and she breathed with difficulty, as if suffering from a painful oppressiveness.

The young man had leaned his head against the side of the car and was sleeping the sound sleep of the farmer. Suddenly, as they were leaving a little

station, the peasant woman seemed to wake up; she opened her basket and took out a piece of bread, some hard-boiled eggs, a flask of wine, and some large, red plums; she began to eat.

The man, in turn, suddenly awoke and looked at her; he watched every mouthful as it went from her knees to her mouth. He sat there with his arms crossed, with a fixed stare, hollow cheeks, and tightly closed lips.

She was eating like a big, greedy woman, drinking a swallow of wine to help the eggs on their downward journey, and then stopping for a minute to get her breath. Everything disappeared, bread, eggs, plums, wine. As soon as she had finished her meal the youth once more closed his eyes. Then, feeling a little uncomfortable, she loosened her waist, and the man once more looked. This did not disturb her; she continued to unbutton her dress, and the strong pressure of her breasts stretched the cloth, showing, through the growing crack, a little white and a little pink. When she felt more at ease, she said in Italian: "It's so hot that one can hardly breathe."

The young man answered in the same language and with the same pronunciation: "It's beautiful weather for traveling."

She asked: "Are you from Piedmont?"

"I am from Asti."

"And I come from Casale."

They were neighbors. They began to talk to each other and spoke of the commonplace things which sufficed to their slow and limited minds. They found that they had mutual acquaintances. They mentioned names, and when they found one which both knew they felt as if a step had been gained

in this friendship. Then they spoke of themselves.

She was married and already had three children, whom she had left with her sister, because she had found a fine position as a nurse with a French lady at Marseilles.

He was looking for work and had been told that there was plenty to be found in that neighborhood, as they were doing considerable building. They were silent.

The heat was becoming oppressive, striking down on the tin roofs of the cars. A cloud of dust followed the train and penetrated the carriages; the fragrance of the oranges and roses was becoming more and more intense, seeming to grow thicker and heavier. The two travelers once more fell asleep.

They opened their eyes at almost the same time. The sun was sinking into the sea, covering the blue expanse with a golden robe. The air seemed lighter and fresher. The nurse was panting, her waist open, her cheeks flabby, her eyes dim, and she said in a weak voice:

“I have given no milk since yesterday and I feel dizzy, as if I should faint.”

He made no response, not knowing what to say. She continued: “When any one has as much milk as I have it is necessary to give it three times a day, otherwise it is most uncomfortable. It feels like a weight on my chest, a weight that stops my breathing and almost breaks my bones. It’s unfortunate to have as much milk as that.”

He replied: “Yes, it’s most unfortunate. It must be most annoying.”

She seemed indeed quite sick, overcome and



weak. She murmured: "All you have to do is to press on them and a perfect stream of milk comes out. It's really most curious to see; its hardly believable. At Casale all the neighbors used to come and look at me."

He said: "Ah! truly?"

"Yes, really. I would show you, only that wouldn't help me any; I can't get enough out that way."

She was silent. The train stopped at a station. Standing near a gate, a woman was holding in her arms a young child which was crying. She was thin and in rags. The nurse looked at her and said, in a pitying voice: "There is another one I could help, and the little one could help me, too. I am not rich, since I am leaving my home, my people, and my darling baby in order to take a position; but I would willingly give five francs to have that child for ten minutes in order to nurse him. It would calm him and me, too. It seems as if it would give me a new life."

She was once more silent. Then she passed her burning hand over her forehead, down which the perspiration was rolling. She moaned: "I can't stand this any longer. I feel as if I was going to die." With an unconscious gesture she completely opened the covering of her bosom. Her right breast appeared enormous and swollen; and the poor woman kept complaining: "Heavens! heavens! what am I going to do?"

The train had started and was once more rolling along amid the sweet-scented flowers. On the blue ocean could be seen some fishing boats riding motionless as if asleep, their reflection in the water making them look as if they were upside down. The

young man, embarrassed, stammered: "But, Madame, perhaps I could . . . relieve you."

She answered in a broken voice: "Yes. You would do me a great favor if you would. I simply can't endure this any longer!"

He kneeled in front of her, and she leaned over him, carrying her breast to his mouth with a maternal motion. In the movement which she made when taking it in her two hands to hold it out to this man, a drop of milk appeared on the end. He drank it eagerly; then he began to nurse greedily and regularly. He had passed both his arms around the waist of the woman, whom he was hugging in order to bring her closer to him. Suddenly she said: "That's enough for this side, now take the other."

He obeyed meekly. She had placed both her hands on the young man's back and was now breathing heavily, happily, gratefully inhaling the perfumed air which was penetrating the car. She said: "How good it smells around here."

He did not answer, but continued to drink at this human fountain, closing his eyes in order better to enjoy it.

She gently pushed him away, saying: "That's enough. I feel much better now. This has given me a new life."

He stood up, wiping his mouth on the back of his hand. As she was closing up her dress, stretched by her enormous development, she said: "You have certainly done me a great favor. I thank you, Monsieur."

He answered, in a grateful tone: "Not at all, Madame, it is I who thank you—I hadn't had anything to eat for three days!"



## FEAR



WE went on deck after dinner. The Mediterranean lay before us without a ripple and shimmering in the moonlight. The great ship glided on, casting upward to the star-studded sky a great serpent of black smoke. Behind us the dazzling white water, stirred by the rapid progress of the heavy bark and beaten by the propeller, foamed, seemed to writhe, and gave off so much brilliancy that one could have called it boiling moonlight.

There were six or eight of us silent with admiration and gazing toward far-away Africa, whither we were going. The Commandant, who was smoking a cigar with us, brusquely resumed the conversation begun at dinner.

“Yes, I was afraid then. My ship remained for six hours on that rock, beaten by

the wind and with a great hole in the side. Fortunately we were picked up toward evening by an English coaler that sighted us."

Then a tall man, of sun-burned face and grave demeanor, one of those men who have evidently traveled unknown and far-away lands, whose calm eye seems to preserve in its depths something of the foreign scenes it has observed, whose appearance shows great will and courage, spoke for the first time.

"You say, Commandant, that you were afraid. I beg to disagree with you. You are in error as to the meaning of the word and the nature of the sensation you experienced. An energetic man never is afraid in the presence of great danger. He is excited, aroused, full of anxiety, but fear is something quite different."

The Commandant laughed and answered: "Bah! I assure you that I was afraid."

Then the man of the tanned countenance addressed us deliberately, as follows:

"Permit me to explain. Fear—and the boldest men may feel fear—is something horrible, an atrocious sensation, a sort of decomposition of the soul, a terrible spasm of brain and heart, the very memory of which brings a shudder of anguish, but when one is brave he feels it neither under fire nor in the presence of sure death, nor in the face of any well-known danger. It springs up under certain abnormal conditions, under certain mysterious influences, in the presence of vague peril. Real fear is a sort of reminiscence of fantastic terrors of the past. A man who believes in ghosts and imagines he sees a spectre in the darkness must feel fear in all its horror."



“As for me, I was overwhelmed with fear in broad daylight about ten years ago, and again one December night last winter.

“Nevertheless, I have gone through many dangers, many adventures which seemed to promise death. I have often been in battle. I have been left for dead by thieves. In America I was condemned as an insurgent to be hanged, and off the coast of China I have been thrown into the sea from the deck of a ship. Each time I thought I was lost, and I at once decided upon my course of action without regret or weakness.

“That is not fear.

“I have felt it in Africa, and yet it is a child of the north. The sunlight banished it like the mist. Consider this fact, gentlemen. Among the Orientals life has no value; resignation is natural. The nights are clear and are free from the sombre spirit of unrest that haunts the brain in cooler lands. In the Orient panic is known, but not fear.

“Well, then! Here is the incident that befell me in Africa.

“I was crossing the great sands of Onargla. It is one of the most curious districts in the world. You have seen the solid, continuous sand of the endless ocean strands. Well, imagine the ocean itself turned to sand in the midst of a storm. Imagine a silent tempest with motionless billows of yellow dust. They are as high as mountains, these uneven, varied surges, rising exactly like unchanged billows, but still larger, and stratified like watered silk. On this wild, silent, and motionless sea, the consuming rays of the tropical sun are poured pitilessly and directly. You have to climb these streaks of red-hot ash, descend again on the other side, climb again,

climb, climb without halt, without repose, without shade. The horses cough, sink to their knees, and slide down the sides of these remarkable hills.

"We were a couple of friends, followed by eight spahis and four camels with their drivers. We were no longer talking, overcome by heat, fatigue, and a thirst such as this burning desert produces. Suddenly one of our men uttered a cry. We all halted, surprised by an unsolved phenomenon known only to travelers in these trackless wastes.

"Somewhere, near us, in an indeterminable direction, a drum was rolling, the mysterious drum of the sands. It was beating distinctly, now with greater resonance and again feebler, ceasing, then resuming its uncanny roll.

"The Arabs, terrified, stared at one another, and one said in his own language: 'Death is upon us.' As he spoke, my companion, my friend, almost a brother, dropped from his horse, falling face downward on the sand, overcome by a sunstroke.

"And for two hours, while I tried in vain to save him, this weird drum filled my ears with its monotonous, intermittent, and incomprehensible tone, and I felt fear lay hold of my bones—real fear, hideous fear, in the presence of this beloved corpse, in this hole scorched by the sun, surrounded by four mountains of sand, and two hundred leagues from any French settlement, while the echo assailed our ears with this furious drum-beat.

"On that day I realized what fear was, but since then I have had another and still more vivid experience."

The Commandant interrupted the speaker:

"I beg your pardon, but what was the drum?"

“ I cannot say,” the traveler replied. “ No one knows. Our officers are often surprised by this singular noise and attribute it generally to the echo produced by a hail of grains of sand blown by the wind against the dry and brittle leaves of weeds, for it has always been noticed that the phenomenon occurs in proximity to little plants burned by the sun and hard as parchment. This sound seems to be magnified, multiplied, and swelled beyond measure in its progress through the valleys of sand, and the drum therefore might be considered a sort of sound mirage. Nothing more. But I did not know that until later.

“ I shall proceed to my second instance.

“ It was last winter, in a forest of the northeast of France. The sky was so overcast that night came two hours earlier than usual. My guide was a peasant, who walked beside me along the narrow road, under the vault of fir trees, through which the wind howled in its fury. Between the tree tops I saw the fleeting clouds, which seemed to hasten as if to escape some object of terror. Sometimes in a fierce gust of wind the whole forest bowed in the same direction with a groan of pain, and a chill laid hold of me, despite my rapid pace and heavy clothing.

“ We were to sleep and take supper at an old gamekeeper’s house not much farther on. I had come for hunting.

“ My guide sometimes raised his eyes and murmured: ‘ Ugly weather!’ Then he told me about the people among whom we were to spend the night. The father had killed a poacher two years before, and since then had been gloomy and behaved as if haunted by a memory. His two married sons lived with him.



"The darkness was profound. I could see nothing before me or around me, and the mass of overhanging, interlacing trees rubbed together, filling the night with an incessant whispering. Finally I saw a light, and soon my companion was knocking upon a door. Sharp women's voices answered us, then a man's voice, a choking voice, asked, 'Who goes there?' My guide gave his name. We entered and beheld a memorable picture.

"An old man with white hair, wild eyes, and a loaded gun in his hands, stood waiting for us in the middle of the kitchen, while two strong youths, armed with axes, guarded the door. In the somber corners I distinguished two women kneeling with faces to the wall.

"Matters were explained, and the old man stood his gun against the wall, at the same time ordering that a room be prepared for me. Then, as the women did not stir: 'Look you, Monsieur,' said he, 'two years ago this night I killed a man, and last year he came back to haunt me. I expect him again to-night.'

"Then he added in a tone that made me smile:

"And so we are somewhat excited.'

"I reassured him as best I could, happy to have arrived on that particular evening and to witness this superstitious terror. I told stories and almost succeeded in calming the whole household.

"Near the fireplace slept an old dog, mustached and almost blind, with his head between his paws, such a dog as reminds you of people you have known.

"Outside the raging storm was beating against the little house, and suddenly, through a small pane of glass, a sort of peep-window placed near the



door, I saw in a brilliant flash of lightning a mass of trees threshed by the wind.

"In spite of my efforts I realized that terror was laying hold of these people, and each time that I ceased to speak all ears listened for distant sounds. Annoyed at these foolish fears, I was about to retire to my bed, when the old gamekeeper suddenly leaped from his chair, seized his gun, and stammered wildly: 'There he is, there he is! I hear him!' The two women again sank upon their knees in the corner and hid their faces, while the sons took up their axes. I was going to try to pacify them once more, when the sleeping dog awakened suddenly, and, raising his head and stretching his neck, looked at the fire with his dim eyes, and uttered one of those mournful howls which make travelers shudder in the darkness and solitude of the country. All eyes were focused upon him now as he rose on his forefeet, as if haunted by a vision, and began to howl at something invisible, unknown, and doubtless horrible, for he was bristling all over. The gamekeeper, with livid face, cried: 'He scents him! He scents him! He was there when I killed him.' The two women, terrified, began to wail in concert with the dog.

"In spite of myself, cold chills ran down my spine. This vision of the animal, at such a time and place, in the midst of these frightened people, was something frightful to witness.

"For an hour the dog howled without stirring; he howled as if in the anguish of a nightmare; and fear, horrible fear, came over me. Fear of what? How can I say? It was fear, and that is all I know.

"We remained motionless and pale, expecting

something awful to happen. Our ears were strained and our hearts beat loudly, while the slightest noise startled us. Then the beast began to walk around the room, sniffing at the walls and growling constantly. His manœuvres were driving us mad! Then the countryman who had brought me thither seized the dog in a paroxysm of rage, and carrying him to a door, which opened into a small court, thrust him forth.

“The noise was suppressed, and we were left plunged in a silence still more terrible. Then suddenly we all started. Some one was gliding along the outside wall toward the forest; then he seemed to be feeling the door with a trembling hand; then for two minutes nothing was heard and we almost lost our minds. Then he returned, still feeling along the wall, and scratching lightly upon the door, as a child might do with his fingernails. Suddenly a face appeared behind the glass of the peep-window, a white face with eyes shining like those of the cat tribe. A sound was heard, an indistinct, plaintive murmur.

“Then there was a formidable burst of noise in the kitchen. The old gamekeeper had fired, and the two sons at once rushed forward and barricaded the window with the great table, reënforcing it with the buffet.

“I swear to you that at the shock of the gun’s discharge, which I did not expect, such an anguish laid hold of my heart, my soul, and my very body that I felt myself about to fall, about to die from fear.

“We remained there until dawn, unable to move, in short, seized by an indescribable numbness of the brain.

“ No one dared to remove the barricade until a thin ray of sunlight appeared through a crack in the back room.

“ At the base of the wall and under the window we found the old dog lying dead, his skull shattered by a ball.

“ He had escaped from the little court by digging a hole under a fence.”

The dark-visaged man became silent, then he added:

“ And yet on that night I incurred no danger, but I should rather again pass through all the hours in which I have confronted the most terrible perils than the one minute when that gun was discharged at the shaggy head in the window.”



## THE TEST



HE Bondel family was a good one, and, although they often quarreled, they were easily reconciled.

Bondel was a merchant who had retired from active business after saving enough to allow him to live quietly; he had rented a little house at Saint-Germain and lived there with his wife. He was a quiet man with very decided opinions; he had a certain degree of education and read serious newspapers; nevertheless, he appreciated the *gaulois* spirit. Endowed with a logical mind, and that practical common sense which is the master quality of the industrial French *bourgeois*, he thought little, but clearly, and reached a decision only after careful consideration of the matter in hand. He was of medium size, with a distinguished look, and was beginning to turn gray.

His wife, who was full of serious qualities, had



also several faults. She had a quick temper and a frankness that bordered upon violence. She bore a grudge a long time. She had once been pretty, but had now become too stout and too red; but in her neighborhood at Saint-Germain she still passed for a very beautiful woman, who exemplified health and a temper.

Their dissensions almost always began at breakfast, over some trivial matter, and they often continued all day and even as long as the following day. Their simple, common, limited life imparted seriousness to the most unimportant matters, and every topic of conversation became a subject of dispute. This had not been so in the days when business occupied their minds, drew their hearts together, and gave them common interests and preoccupation.

But at Saint-Germain they saw fewer people. It had been necessary to make new acquaintances, to create for themselves a new world among strangers, a new existence devoid of occupations. Then the monotony of loneliness had soured each of them a little; and the quiet happiness which they had hoped and waited for with the coming of riches did not appear.

One June morning, just as they were sitting down to breakfast, Bondel asked:

"Do you know the people who live in the little red cottage at the end of the Rue du Berceau?"

Madame Bondel was out of sorts. She answered:

"Yes and no; I am acquainted with them, but I do not care to know them."

"Why not? They seem to be very nice."

"Because . . ."

"This morning I met the husband on the terrace and we took a little walk together."

Seeing that there was danger in the air, Bondel added: "It was he who spoke to me first."

His wife looked at him in a displeased manner. She continued: "You would have done just as well to avoid him."

"Why?"

"Because there are rumors about them."

"What kind?"

"Oh! rumors such as one often hears!"

M. Bondel was unfortunately a little hasty. He exclaimed:

"My dear, you know that I abhor gossip. As for those people, I find them very pleasant."

She asked testily: "The wife also?"

"Why, yes; although I have barely seen her."

The discussion gradually grew more heated, turning around the same subject for lack of other motives. Madame Bondel obstinately refused to say what she had heard about these neighbors, allowing things to be understood without saying exactly what they were. Bondel would shrug his shoulders, grin, and exasperate his wife. She finally cried out: "Well! that gentleman is deceived by his wife, there!"

The husband answered quietly: "I can't see how that affects the honor of a man."

She seemed dumfounded: "What! you don't see? . . . you don't see? . . . well, that's too much! You don't see! . . . why, it's a public scandal! he is disgraced!"

He answered: "Ah! by no means! Should a man be considered disgraced because he is deceived, because he is betrayed, robbed? . . . no, indeed!"

I'll grant you that that may be the case for the wife, but as for him . . . ."

She became furious, exclaiming: "For him as well as for her. They are both in disgrace; it's a public shame."

Bondel, very calm, asked: "First of all, is it true? Who can assert such a thing as long as no one has been caught in the act?"

Madame Bondel was growing uneasy; she snapped: "What? Who can assert it? Why, everybody! everybody! it's as clear as the nose on your face. Everybody knows it and is talking about it. There is not the slightest doubt."

He was grinning: "For a long time people thought that the sun turned around the earth. This man loves his wife and speaks of her tenderly and reverently. This whole business is nothing but lies!"

Stamping her foot, she stammered: "Do you think that that fool, that idiot, knows anything about it?"

Bondel did not grow angry; he was reasoning clearly: "Excuse me. This gentleman is no fool. He seemed to me, on the contrary, to be very intelligent and shrewd; and you can't make me believe that a man with brains doesn't notice such a thing in his own house, when the neighbors, who are not there, are ignorant of no detail of this *liaison*—for I'll warrant that they know everything.

Madame Bondel had a fit of angry gayety, which irritated her husband's nerves. She laughed: "Ha! ha! ha! they're all the same! There's not a man alive who could discover a thing like that unless his nose was stuck into it!"

The discussion was wandering to other topics

now. She was exclaiming over the blindness of deceived husbands, a thing which he doubted and which she affirmed with such airs of personal contempt that he finally grew angry. Then the discussion became an angry quarrel, where she took the side of the women and he defended the men. He had the conceit to declare: "Well, I swear that if I had ever been deceived, I should have noticed it, and immediately, too. And I should have taken away your desire for such things in such a manner that it would have taken more than one doctor to set you on foot again!"

Boiling with anger, she cried out to him: "You! you! why, you're as big a fool as the others, do you hear!"

He still maintained: "I can swear to you that I am not!"

She laughed so impertinently that he felt his heart beat and a chill run down his back. For the third time he said:

"*I should have seen it!*"

She rose, still laughing in the same manner. She slammed the door and left the room, saying: "Well! if that isn't too much!"





## II



BONDEL remained alone, ill at ease. That insolent, provoking laugh had touched him to the quick. He went outside, walked, dreamed. The realization of the loneliness of his new life made him sad and morbid. The neighbor whom he had met that morning came to him with outstretched hands. They continued their walk together. After touching on various subjects they came to talk of their wives. Both seemed to have something to confide, something inexpressible, vague, about these beings associated with their lives—their wives. The neighbor was saying:

“ Really, at times, one might think that they bear some particular ill-will toward their husband, just because he is a husband. I love my wife—I love her very much; I appreciate and respect her; well! there are times when she seems to have more confidence and faith in our friends than in me.”

Bondel immediately thought: “ There is no doubt; my wife was right! ”

When he left this man he began to think things

over again. He felt in his soul a strange confusion of contradictory ideas, a sort of interior burning; that mocking, impertinent laugh kept ringing in his ears and seemed to say: "Why, you are just the same as the others, you fool!" That was indeed bravado, one of those pieces of impudence of which a woman makes use when she dares everything, risks everything, to wound and humiliate the man who has aroused her ire. This poor man must also be one of those deceived husbands, like so many others. He had said sadly: "There are times when she seems to have more confidence and faith in our friends than in me." That is how a husband formulated his observations on the particular attentions of his wife for another man. That was all. He had seen nothing more. He was like the others . . . all the others!

And how Bondel's own wife had laughed strangely, as she said: "You too . . . you too . . ." How wild and imprudent these creatures are who can arouse such suspicions in the heart for the sole purpose of revenge!

He ran over their whole life since their marriage, reviewed his mental list of their acquaintances, to see whether she had ever appeared to show more confidence in any one else than in himself. He never had suspected any one, he was so calm, so sure of her, so confident.

But, now he thought of it, she had had a friend, an intimate friend, who for almost a year had dined with them three times a week. Tancrét, good old Tancrét, whom he, Bondel, loved as a brother and whom he continued to see on the sly, since his wife, he did not know why, had grown angry at the charming fellow.

He stopped to think, looking over the past with anxious eyes. Then he grew angry at himself for harboring this shameful insinuation of the defiant, jealous, bad ego which lives in all of us. He blamed and accused himself when he remembered the visits and the demeanor of this friend whom his wife had dismissed for no apparent reason. But suddenly other memories returned to him, similar ruptures due to the vindictive character of Madame Bondel, who never pardoned a slight. Then he laughed frankly at himself for the doubts which he had nursed; and he remembered the angry looks of his wife as he would tell her, when he returned at night: "I saw good old Tancret, and he wished to be remembered to you," and he reassured himself.

She would invariably answer: "When you see that gentleman you can tell him that I can very well dispense with his remembrances." With what an irritated, angry look she would say these words! How well one could feel that she did not and would not forgive . . . and he had suspected her even for a second? . . . such foolishness!

But why did she grow so angry? She never had given the exact reason for this quarrel. She still bore him that grudge! Was it? . . . but no . . . no . . . and Bondel declared that he was lowering himself by even thinking of such things.

Yes, he was undoubtedly lowering himself, but he could not help thinking of it, and he asked himself with terror if this idea which had entered into his mind had not come to stop, if he did not carry in his heart the seed of fearful torment. He knew himself; he was a man to think over his doubts, as formerly he would ruminate over his commercial

operations, for days and nights, endlessly weighing the pros and the cons.

He was already becoming excited; he was walking fast and losing his calm appearance. Everything is futile against Ideas. They are impregnable, impossible to drive away, impossible to kill.

Suddenly a plan occurred to him; it was bold, so bold that at first he doubted whether he would carry it out.

Each time that he met Tancrét, his friend would ask for news of Madame Bondel, and Bondel would answer: "She is still a little angry." Nothing more. Good Lord! What a fool he had been! . . . Perhaps! . . .

Well, he would take the train to Paris, go to Tancrét, and bring him back with him that very evening, assuring him that his wife's mysterious anger had disappeared. But how would Madame Bondel act? . . . What a scene there would be! . . . what anger! . . . what scandal! . . . what of it? . . . that would be revenge! When she should come face to face with him, unexpectedly, he certainly ought to be able to read the truth in their expressions.





### III



**E** immediately went to the station, bought his ticket, got into the car, and as soon as he felt himself being carried away by the train, he felt a fear, a kind of dizziness, at what he was going to do. In order not to weaken, back down, and return alone, he tried not to think of the matter any longer, to bring his mind to bear on other affairs, to do what he had decided to do with a blind resolution; and he began to hum tunes from operettas and music halls until he reached Paris.

As soon as he found himself walking along the streets that led to Tancret's, he felt like stopping. He paused in front of several shops, noticed the prices of certain objects, grew interested in new things, felt like taking a glass of beer, which was not at all according to his habits; and as he approached his friend's dwelling he ardently hoped not to meet him. But Tancret was at home, alone, reading. He jumped up in surprise, crying: "Ah! Bondel! what luck!"

Bondel, embarrassed, answered: "Yes, my dear fellow, I happened to be in Paris, and I thought I'd drop in and shake hands with you."

"That's very nice, very nice! The more so that for some time you have not favored me with your presence very often."

"Well, you see—even against one's will, one is often influenced by surrounding conditions, and as my wife seemed to bear you some ill-will . . . ."

"Jove! . . . 'seemed' . . . she did better than that, since she showed me the door."

"What was the reason? I never heard it."

"Oh! nothing at all . . . a bit of foolishness . . . a discussion in which we did not both agree."

"But what was the subject of this discussion?"

"A lady of my acquaintance, whom you may perhaps know by name, Madame Boutin."

"Ah! really . . . well! I think that my wife has forgotten her grudge, for this very morning she spoke to me of you in very pleasant terms."

Tanceret started and seemed so dumfounded that for a few minutes he could find nothing to say. Then he asked: "She spoke of me . . . in pleasant terms? . . ."

"Yes."

"You are sure?"

"Of course I am . . . I am not dreaming."

"And then? . . ."

"And then . . . as I was coming to Paris I thought that I would please you by coming to tell you the good news."

"Why, yes . . . why, yes . . ."

Bondel appeared to hesitate; then, after a short pause, he added: "I even had an idea."

“What is it?”

“To bring you back to the house with me for dinner.”

Tancret, who was naturally prudent, seemed a little worried by this proposition, and he asked: “Oh! really . . . is it possible? . . . Are we not exposing ourselves to . . . to . . . a scene? . . .”

“No, no, indeed!”

“Because, you know, Madame Bondel often remains angry for a long time.”

“Yes, but I can assure you that she no longer bears you any ill-will. I am even convinced that it will be a great pleasure for her to see you thus, unexpectedly.”

“Really?”

“Yes, really!”

“Well, then! let us go along. I am delighted. You see, this misunderstanding was very unpleasant for me.”

They set out together toward the Saint-Lazare station, arm in arm. They made the trip in silence. Both seemed absorbed in deep meditation. Seated in the car, one opposite the other, they looked at each other without speaking, each observing that the other was pale.

Then they left the train and once more linked arms as if to unite against some common danger. After a walk of a few minutes they stopped, a little out of breath, before Bondel's house. Bondel ushered his friend into the parlor, called the servant, and asked: “Is Madame at home?”

“Yes, Monsieur.”

“Please ask her to come down at once.”

They dropped into two armchairs and waited.

Both were moved by the same desire, that of escaping before the appearance of the much-feared person.

A well-known, heavy tread could be heard descending the stairs. A hand moved the knob, and both men watched the brass handle turn. Then the door opened wide, and Madame Bondel stopped and looked around before she entered. She looked, blushed, trembled, retreated a step, then stood motionless, her cheeks aflame and her hands resting against the sides of the entrance.

Tancret, as pale as if about to faint, had arisen, letting fall his hat, which rolled along the floor. He was stammering: "Goodness! . . . Madame . . . it is I . . . I thought . . . I dared . . . I was so sorry . . ."

As she did not answer, he continued: "Will you forgive me?"

Then, quickly, carried away by some impulse, she walked toward him with her hands outstretched; and when he had taken, pressed, and held these two hands, she said, in a trembling, weak little voice, which was new to her husband:

"Ah! my dear friend . . . how happy I am!"

And Bondel, who was watching them, felt an icy chill run over him, as if he had been dipped in a cold bath.







## MY UNCLE JULES



WHITE-HAIRED old man begged us for alms. My companion, Joseph Davranche, gave him five francs. Noticing my surprised look, he said: "That poor unfortunate reminds me of a story which I shall tell you, the memory of which continually pursues me. Here it is:

"My family, which came originally from Havre, was not rich. We just managed to make both ends meet. My father worked hard, came home late from the office, and earned very little. I had two sisters.

"My mother suffered a good deal from our reduced circumstances, and she often had harsh words for her husband, veiled and sly reproaches. The poor man then had a gesture which used to distress me. He would pass his open hand over his forehead, as if to wipe away perspiration which did not exist, and he would answer nothing. I felt his helpless suffering. We economized on everything and

never would accept an invitation to dinner, in order not to have to return the courtesy. All our provisions were bought at bargain sales. My sisters made their own gowns, and long discussions would arise on the price of a piece of braid worth fifteen centimes a yard. Our meals usually consisted of soup and beef prepared with every kind of sauce. It seems that that is healthy and nourishing, but I should have preferred a change.

“ I used to go through terrible scenes on account of lost buttons and torn trousers.

“ Every Sunday, dressed in our best, we would take our walk along the breakwater. My father, in a frock coat, high hat, and kid gloves, would offer his arm to my mother, decked out and beribboned like a ship on a holiday. My sisters, who were always ready first, would await the signal for leaving; but at the last minute some one always found a spot on my father's frock coat and quickly it had to be wiped away with a rag moistened with benzine.

“ My father, in his shirt-sleeves, his silk hat on his head, would await the completion of the operation, while my mother, putting on her spectacles and taking off her gloves in order not to spoil them, would make haste.

“ Then we set out ceremoniously. My sisters marched on ahead, arm in arm. They were of marriageable age and had to be displayed. I walked on the left of my mother and my father on her right. I remember the pompous air of my poor parents in these Sunday walks, their stern expression, their stiff walk. They moved slowly, with a serious expression, their bodies straight, their legs stiff, as if something of extreme importance depended upon their appearance.

“ Every Sunday, when the big steamers were returning from unknown and distant countries, my father would invariably utter the same words:

“ ‘ What a surprise it would be if Jules were on that one! Eh? ’

“ My Uncle Jules, my father’s brother, was the only hope of the family, after being its only fear. I had heard about him since childhood, and it seemed to me that I should recognize him immediately, knowing as much about him as I did. I knew every detail of his life up to the day of his departure for America, although this period of his life was spoken of only in hushed tones.

“ It seems that he had led a bad life, that is to say, he had squandered a little money, which action, in a poor family, is one of the greatest crimes. With rich people a man who amuses himself only *sows his oats*. He is what is generally called a *sport*. But among needy families a boy who forces his parents to break into the capital becomes a good-for-nothing, a rascal, a scamp. And this distinction is just, although the action be the same, for consequences alone determine the seriousness of the act.

“ Well, Uncle Jules had visibly diminished the inheritance on which my father had counted, after he had swallowed his own to the last penny. Then, according to the custom of the times, he had been shipped off to America on a freighter going from Havre to New York.

“ Once there, my uncle began to sell something or other, and he soon wrote that he was making a little money and that he soon hoped to be able to indemnify my father for the harm he had done him. This letter caused a profound emotion in the family. Jules, who up to that time had not been



worth his salt, suddenly became a good man, a kind-hearted fellow, true and honest like all the Dav-ranches.

“ One of the captains told us that he had rented a large shop and was doing an important business.

“ Two years later a second letter came, saying: ‘ My dear Philippe, I am writing to tell you not to worry about my health, which is excellent. Business is good. I leave to-morrow for a long trip to South America. I may be away for several years without sending you any news. If I shouldn’t write, don’t worry. When my fortune is made I shall return to Havre. I hope that it will not be too long and that we shall live happily together. . . . ’

“ This letter became the gospel of the family. It was read on the slightest provocation, and it was shown to everybody.

“ For ten years nothing was heard from Uncle Jules; but as time went on my father’s hope grew, and my mother also often said:

“ ‘ When that good Jules is here, our situation will be different. There is one who knew how to get along! ’

“ And every Sunday, while watching the big steamers approaching from the horizon, pouring out a stream of smoke, my father would repeat his eternal question:

“ ‘ What a surprise it would be if Jules were on that one! Eh? ’

“ We almost expected to see him waving his handkerchief and crying:

“ ‘ Hey! Philippe! ’

“ Thousands of schemes had been planned on the strength of this expected return; we were even to buy a little house with my uncle’s money—a little



place in the country near Ingouville. In fact, I wouldn't swear that my father had not already begun negotiations.

"The elder of my sisters was then twenty-eight, the other twenty-six. They were not yet married, and that was a great grief for every one.

"At last a suitor presented himself for the younger one. He was a clerk, not rich, but honorable. I have always been morally certain that Uncle Jules' letter, which was shown him one evening, had carried away the young man's hesitations and definitely decided him.

"He was accepted eagerly, and it was decided that after the wedding the whole family should take a trip to Jersey.

"Jersey is the ideal trip for poor people. It is not far; one crosses a strip of sea in a steamer and lands on foreign soil, as this little island belongs to England. Thus a Frenchman, with a two hours' sail, can observe a neighboring people at home and study their customs.

"This trip to Jersey completely absorbed our minds, was our sole anticipation, the constant thought of our minds.

"At last we left. I see it as plainly as if it had happened yesterday. The boat was getting up steam against the quay of Granville; my father, bewildered, was superintending the loading of our three pieces of baggage; my mother, nervous, had taken the arm of my unmarried sister, who seemed lost since the departure of the other one, like the last chicken of a brood; behind us came the bride and groom, who always stayed behind, a thing that often made me turn around.

"The whistle sounded. We got on board, and

the vessel, leaving the breakwater, forged ahead through a sea as flat as a marble table. We watched the shores disappear in the distance, happy and proud, like all who do not travel much.

“ My father was inflating his stomach to the breezes, under his frock coat, which had that morning been very carefully cleaned; and he spread around him that odor of benzine which made me recognize Sundays. Suddenly he noticed two elegantly dressed ladies to whom two gentlemen were offering some oysters. An old, ragged sailor was opening them with his knife and passing them to the gentlemen, who would then offer them to the ladies. They ate them in a dainty manner, holding the shell on a fine handkerchief and advancing their mouths a little in order not to spot their dresses. Then they would drink the liquid with a rapid little motion and throw the shell overboard.

“ My father was probably pleased with this delicate manner of eating oysters on a moving ship. He found it genteel and refined, and, going up to my mother and sisters, he asked:

“ ‘ Would you like me to offer you some oysters? ’

“ My mother hesitated on account of the expense, but my two sisters immediately accepted. My mother said, in a provoked manner:

“ ‘ I am afraid that they will hurt my stomach. Offer the children some, but not too much, it would make them sick.’ Then, turning toward me, she added:

“ ‘ As for Joseph, he doesn’t need any. Boys shouldn’t be spoiled.’

“ Therefore I remained beside my mother, finding this distinction unjust. I watched my father as

he pompously conducted my two sisters and his son-in-law toward the ragged old sailor.

“The two ladies had just left, and my father showed my sisters how to eat them without spilling the liquor. He even tried to give them an example, and seized an oyster. He attempted to imitate the ladies, and immediately spilled all the liquid over his coat. I heard my mother mutter:

“ ‘He would do far better to keep still.’

“But suddenly my father appeared to be worried; he retreated a few steps, stared at his family gathered around the old shell-opener, and quickly he came toward us. He seemed very pale, with a peculiar look. In a low voice he said to my mother:

“ ‘It’s extraordinary how that man opening the oysters looks like Jules.’

“Astonished, my mother asked:

“ ‘What Jules?’

“My father continued:

“ ‘Why . . . my brother. . . . If I did not know that he was well off in America, I should think it was he.’

“Bewildered, my mother stammered:

“ ‘You are crazy! As long as you know that it is not he, why do you say such foolish things?’

“But my father insisted:

“ ‘Go on over and see, Clarisse! I would rather have you see with your own eyes.’

“She arose and walked to her daughters. I, too, was watching the man. He was old, dirty, wrinkled, and did not lift his eyes from his work.

“My mother returned. I noticed that she was trembling. She exclaimed quickly:

“ ‘I believe that it is he. Why don’t you ask



the captain? But be very careful that we don't have this rogue on our hands again!'

"My father walked away, but I followed him. I felt strangely moved.

"The captain, a tall, thin man, with blond whiskers, was walking along the bridge with an important air as if he were commanding the Indian mail.

"My father addressed him ceremoniously, and questioned him about his profession, adding many compliments:

" 'What might be the importance of Jersey? What did it produce? What was the population? The customs? The nature of the soil? Etc., etc., etc.'

" 'You have there an old shell-opener who seems quite interesting. Do you know anything about him?'

"The captain, whom this conversation began to weary, answered dryly:

" 'He is some old French tramp whom I found last year in America, and I brought him back. It seems that he has some relatives in Havre, but that he doesn't wish to return to them because he owes them money. His name is Jules . . . Jules Darmanche or Darvanche or something like that. It seems that he was once rich over there, but you can see what's left of him now.'

"My father turned ashy pale and muttered, his throat contracted, his eyes haggard:

" 'Ah! ah! very well . . . very well. . . . I'm not in the least surprised. . . . Thank you very much, captain.'

"He went away, and the astonished sailor watched him disappear. He returned to my mother so upset that she said to him:



“ ‘ Sit down; some one will notice that something is the matter.’

“ He sank down on a bench and stammered:

“ ‘ It’s he! It’s he!’

“ Then he asked:

“ ‘ What are we going to do?’

“ She answered quickly:

“ ‘ We must get the children out of the way. Since Joseph knows everything, he can go and get them. We must take good care that our son-in-law doesn’t find out.’

“ My father seemed absolutely bewildered. He murmured:

“ ‘ What a catastrophe!’

“ Suddenly growing furious, my mother said:

“ ‘ I always thought that that thief never would do anything, and that he would drop down on us again! As if one could expect anything from a Davranche! . . .’

“ My father passed his hand over his forehead, as he always did when his wife reproached him. She added:

“ ‘ Give Joseph some money so that he can pay for the oysters. All that it needed to cap the climax would be to be recognized by that beggar. That would be very pleasant! Let’s get down to the other end of the boat, and take care that that man doesn’t come near us!’

“ They gave me five francs and walked away.

“ Astonished, my sisters were awaiting their father. I claimed that mamma had felt a sudden attack of sea-sickness, and I asked the shell-opener:

“ ‘ How much do we owe you, Monsieur?’

“ I felt like laughing: he was my uncle! He answered:

“ ‘ Two francs fifty.’

“ I held out my five francs and he returned the change. I looked at his hand; it was a poor, wrinkled sailor’s hand, and I looked at his face, an unhappy old face. I said to myself:

“ ‘ That is my uncle, the brother of my father, my uncle!’

“ I gave him a ten-cent tip. He thanked me:

“ ‘ God bless you, my young sir!’

“ He spoke like a poor man receiving alms. I couldn’t help thinking that he must have begged over there! My sisters looked at me, surprised at my generosity. When I returned the two francs to my father, my mother asked me in surprise:

“ ‘ Was there three francs’ worth? . . . That is impossible.’

“ I answered in a firm voice:

“ ‘ I gave ten cents as a tip.’

“ My mother started, and, staring at me, she exclaimed:

“ ‘ You must be crazy! Give ten cents to that man, to that vagabond! . . .’

“ She stopped at a look from my father, who was pointing at his son-in-law. Then everybody was silent.

“ Before us, in the distant horizon, a purple shadow seemed to rise out of the sea. It was Jersey.

“ As we approached the breakwater a violent desire seized me once more to see my Uncle Jules, to be near him, to say to him something consoling, something tender. But as no one was eating any more oysters, he had disappeared, having probably gone below to the dirty hold which was the home of the poor wretch.”



## THE BAPTISM



HE men, dressed up in their Sunday clothes, were waiting in front of the door to the farm. The May sun was pouring its bright light over the blossoming apple trees, which looked like immense white bouquets, covering the whole yard with their pink, perfumed blossoms. Everywhere their tiny petals were whirling and floating about and falling into the high grass, where the dandelions stood out like fire and the poppies looked like drops of blood.

A pig was slumbering at the edge of the dung-heap, while around it roamed a whole troop of little ones with their tails twisted up in knots.

Finally, in the distance, behind the trees of the farm, the church bell sounded. Its iron voice threw out into the joyous sky its faint and distant call. Swallows darted like arrows across the blue space.

Mingled with the delicate and sweet scent of the apple trees one could at times notice the smell of the stable. One of the men at the door turned around to the house and cried:

“Come, come, Mélina, the bells are ringing!”

He was a tall peasant of about thirty, who had not yet been bent or deformed by long work in the fields. An old man, his father, gnarled like the trunk of a tree, with swollen wrists and crooked legs, exclaimed:

“Women are never ready!”

Two other sons of the old man began to laugh, and one of them, turning toward his older brother, who had been the first one to call out, said:

“Go get them, Polyte, or they won’t come before noon.”

The young man entered the house. A troop of ducks which had stopped near the farmers began to flap their wings and quack; then they turned toward the pond with their slow waddling steps.

At last a stout woman, carrying a two-months-old child, appeared in the doorway. The white ribbons of her headdress streamed behind her over a red shawl as brilliant as fire; and the youngster, wrapped in white clothes, was resting against the well-developed stomach of the nurse.

Then, in turn, the mother appeared, leaning on her husband’s arm. She was about eighteen, tall, strong, fresh, and smiling. Next came the two grandmothers, withered like dried apples, evidently tired by many years of hard and patient work. One of them was a widow; she took the arm of the grandfather, who had been standing before the door, and they set off at the head of the procession behind the child and the midwife. The rest of the family



followed, the younger ones carrying bags full of sugarplums.

In the distance, the little bell was restlessly ringing, calling for the frail infant with all its might. All along the road youngsters would stop, people would come to the fences, farm girls would stand between two pails of milk, which they would place on the ground in order to watch the procession pass.

The nurse was triumphantly carrying her living burden, stepping over pools of water. The old people followed ceremoniously, walking a little bent on account of age and past troubles; the young people felt like dancing, and they would look at the girls who stopped to watch them pass; and the father and mother walked along gravely, more serious than the others, following this child which later would replace them and would perpetuate through the country their name, the name of the Dentu, well known throughout the whole neighborhood.

They came out on the plain and took the short cut through the fields.

The pointed spire of the church could now be seen. An opening appeared just below the slate roof; and something kept moving in there, going and coming rapidly behind the narrow window. It was the bell, which was still ringing, calling to the newborn babe to come, for the first time, to the house of God. A dog had followed the procession. The children threw him sugarplums; he kept running around the people.

The door of the church was open and the priest was waiting before the altar. He was a tall, thin, strong, red-haired man, also a Dentu, an uncle of the little one, another brother of the father. He christened his nephew Prosper-César, and the latter

began to cry as soon as he tasted the symbolic salt.

When the ceremony was over the family stood on the threshold while the priest took off his surplice; then the homeward journey began. They were going quickly now, for all were hungry. All the youngsters of the neighborhood were following them, and each time that a handful of candy was thrown out there was a regular battle, into which the dog would jump, in order to pick up some of the sweets; he was pulled by the tail, by the ears, by the legs, but he was more obstinate than all the children put together. The nurse, a little tired, said to the priest, who was walking beside her:

“Monsieur le Curé, do you mind carrying your nephew for a while, while I limber up a little? I am beginning to get cramps.”

The priest took the child, whose white dress made a bright spot against his black cassock, and he kissed it, embarrassed by this light burden, not knowing how to hold it or what to do with it. Everybody began to laugh. One of the grandmothers called out to him:

“Don’t you feel sorry that you’ll never have any like that?”

The priest didn’t answer. He was taking great strides, staring at the blue-eyed little one, whose plump cheeks he still felt like kissing. He could resist no longer, and, holding him up to his face, he kissed him for a long time. The father cried:

“Say! if you want one, all you have to do is to say so!”

They began to joke as do people from the fields. As soon as they were seated at the table, the heavy country wit broke out like a storm. The two other

sons were about to marry, and they had brought their sweethearts. The guests were continually making allusions to the future generations which these unions promised.

They used brutal, common, vulgar words, which made the blushing girls snicker and the men burst out laughing. They would strike their fists on the table and howl. The priest, who was used to these country debauches, sat quietly beside the nurse, tickling his nephew's mouth with his finger in order to make him laugh. He seemed surprised at the sight of this child, as if he never had seen him. He watched him attentively, with an awakening tenderness, an unknown, strange, lively, and yet sad love for this strange little creature who was the son of his brother.

He heard nothing, saw nothing; he was watching the child. He felt like once more taking it on his knees, for he kept, on his chest and in his heart, the sweet sensation of having carried him back from the church. He sat there, moved by this embryo of a man as if by an unfathomable mystery of which he never had thought, a divine and sacred mystery, the great mystery of life which is beginning, of awakening love, of the race which is reproducing itself, of the continuation of humanity.

The nurse was eating, her face red, her eyes shining, embarrassed by the little one which separated her from the table. The priest said to her:

“Give him to me; I'm not hungry.”

He took the child again. Then everything about him seemed to disappear, to fade away; he sat there with his eyes fixed on this plump, rosy face; and little by little the heat of this little body penetrated through his chest like a delicate, pure, chaste,



delightful caress, which filled his eyes with tears.

The noise of the company was now becoming frightful. The child, excited by the clamor, began to cry. A voice exclaimed:

“ Monsieur l'Abbé, why don't you nurse him? ”

A burst of laughter shook the room. But the mother arose and carried her son into the neighboring chamber. She returned after a few minutes, saying that he was sleeping calmly in his cradle. Meats, vegetables, cider, and wine were being engulfed in the mouths, were swelling up the stomachs, making eyes sparkle and minds wander. Night had fallen when the coffee was served. The priest had disappeared for a long time before his absence was noticed.

At last the young mother arose to see if the young one was still sleeping. It was now dark. She felt her way into the room and advanced with her arms stretched out in order not to strike against any furniture. But a strange noise stopped her short; she left the room dazed, sure of having heard some one move. She returned to the dining-room pale and trembling, and told what she had heard. All the men arose, drunk and threatening; the father rushed forward with a lamp in his hand.

The priest was kneeling near the cradle, his head on the pillow where the child was sleeping, weeping as if his heart would break.







## THE MASK



HERE was a fancy-dress ball at the Elysée-Montmartre that evening. It was for the *Mi-Carême*, and the crowds were pouring into the brightly lighted passage which leads to the dance hall, like water flowing through the open lock of a canal. The loud call of the orchestra, bursting like a storm of music, shook the rafters, swelled through the whole neighborhood, and awoke, in the streets and in the depths of the houses, an irresistible desire to jump, to be hot, to have fun, which slumbers within each human animal.

The patrons came from every quarter of Paris; there were people of all classes who love noisy pleasures, a little low and tinged with debauch. There were clerks and girls—girls of every description, from the common cotton to the finest batiste;

rich girls, old and covered with diamonds, and poor girls of sixteen, full of the desire to revel, to belong to men, to spend money. Elegant black evening suits, in search of fresh or faded but appetizing novelty, wandering through the excited crowds, looking, searching, while masks seemed moved above all by the desire for amusement. Already the far-famed quadrilles had attracted around them a curious crowd. The moving heads, which encircled the four dancers, twisted around like a snake, sometimes nearer and sometimes farther away, according to the motions of the performers. The two women, whose lower limbs seemed to be attached to their bodies by rubber springs, were making wonderful and surprising motions with their legs. Their partners hopped and skipped about, waving their arms around, and, under their masks, one could imagine their panting breath.

One of them, who had taken his place in the most famous quadrille, as substitute for an absent celebrity, the handsome *Songe-au-Gosse*, and who was trying to keep up with the tireless *Arête-de-Veau*, was making strange fancy steps which aroused the joy and irony of the audience.

He was thin, dressed like a dandy, with a pretty varnished mask on his face; it had a curly blond mustache and a wavy wig. He looked like a wax figure from the Musée Grévin, like a strange and fantastic caricature of the charming young man of fashion plates, and he danced with a visible effort, clumsily, with a comical impetuosity. He seemed rusty beside the others, when he tried to imitate their gambols: he seemed overcome by rheumatism, as heavy as a Great Dane playing with greyhounds. Mocking bravos encouraged him. And he, intoxi-

eated with ardor, jiggled about with such frenzy that suddenly, carried away by a wild spurt, he pitched head foremost into the living wall formed by the audience, which opened up before him to allow him to pass, then closed around the lifeless body of the inanimate dancer, stretched out on his face.

Some men picked him up and carried him away, calling for a doctor. A gentleman stepped forward, young and elegant, in well-fitting evening clothes, with large pearl studs. "I am a professor of the Faculty of Medicine," he said, in a modest voice. He was allowed to pass, and he entered a small room full of little pasteboard boxes, where the still lifeless dancer had been stretched out on some chairs. The doctor at first wished to take off the mask, and he noticed that it was attached in a complicated manner, with a perfect network of small metal wires which cleverly bound it to his wig and covered the whole head. Even the neck was imprisoned in a false skin which continued to the chin, and was painted the color of flesh, being attached to the collar of the shirt.

All this had to be cut with strong scissors; when the physician had slit open this surprising arrangement, from shoulder to the temple, he opened this armor and found the face of a man old, worn out, thin and wrinkled. The surprise among those who had brought in this seemingly young dancer was so great that no one laughed, no one said a word.

All were watching this sad face, leaning against a straw chair, its eyes closed, covered with white hairs, some long, falling from the forehead over the face, others short, growing around the face and the chin, and, beside this poor head, that little, pretty, neat, varnished, smiling mask.

The man regained consciousness after being inanimate for a long time, but he still seemed to be so weak and sick that the physician feared some dangerous complication. He asked: "Where do you live?"

The old dancer seemed to be making an effort to remember, and then he mentioned the name of the street, which no one knew. He was asked for more definite information about the neighborhood. He answered with a great slowness, indecision, and difficulty, which revealed his upset state of mind. The physician continued:

"I will take you home personally."

Curiosity had overcome him to find out who this strange dancer, this phenomenal jumper, might be. Soon the two rolled away in a cab to the other side of Montmartre.

They stopped before a high building of poor appearance. They went up a winding staircase. The doctor held to the banister, which was so grimy that the hand stuck to it; and he supported the dizzy old man, whose forces were beginning to return. They stopped at the fourth floor.

The door at which they had knocked was opened by an old woman, neat-looking, with a white night-cap inclosing a thin face with sharp features, one of these good, rough faces of a hard-working and faithful woman. She cried out:

"For goodness' sake! What's the matter?"

He told her the whole affair in a few words. She became reassured, and even calmed the physician himself by telling him that the same thing had happened many times. She counseled: "He must be put to bed, Monsieur, that is all; let him sleep, and to-morrow he will be all right."



The doctor continued: " But he can hardly get a word out of his mouth."

" Oh! that's just a little drink, nothing more; he has eaten no dinner in order to be nimble, and then he took a few absinths in order to work himself up to the proper pitch. You see, drink gives strength to his legs, but it stops his thoughts and words. He is too old to dance as he does. Really, his lack of common sense is enough to drive one mad! "

The doctor, surprised, insisted:

" But why does he dance like that, at his age? "

She shrugged her shoulders and turned red from the anger which was slowly rising within her; and she cried out:

" Ah! yes, why? so that the people will think him young under his mask; so that the women will still take him for a young dandy and whisper nasty things into his ears; so that he can rub up against all their dirty skins, with their perfumes and powders and cosmetics . . . ah! it's a fine business! What a life I have had for the last forty years! But we must first get him to bed in order to work off this sickness. Would you mind helping me? When he is like that I can't do anything with him alone."

The old man was sitting on his bed, with a tipsy look, his long white hair falling over his face. His companion looked at him with tender yet furious eyes. She continued:

" Just see the fine head he has for his age; and yet he has to go and disguise himself in order to make people think that he is young. It's a perfect shame! Really, he has a fine head, Monsieur! Wait, I'll show it to you before putting him to bed."

She went to a table on which stood the wash-basin, a pitcher of water, soap, and a comb and brush. She took the brush, returned to the bed and pushed back the drunkard's tangled hair; in a few seconds she made him look like a model fit for a great painter, with his long white locks flowing around his neck. Then she stepped back in order to observe him, saying: "There! isn't he fine for his age?"

"Very," agreed the doctor, who was beginning to enjoy himself.

She added: "And if you had known him when he was twenty-five! But we must get him to bed, otherwise the drink will make him sick. Do you mind drawing off that sleeve? . . . higher . . . like that . . . that's right . . . now the trousers . . . wait, I will take his shoes off . . . that's right. Now, hold him upright while I open the bed . . . there . . . let us put him in . . . If you think that he is going to disturb himself when it is time for me to get in you are mistaken. I have to find a little corner any place I can. That doesn't bother him! Bah! You old pleasure seeker!"

As soon as he felt himself stretched out in his sheets, the old man closed his eyes, opened them, closed them again, and over his whole satisfied face appeared the energetic resolution to sleep. The doctor examined him with an ever-increasing interest, and asked: "Does he go to all the fancy balls and try to be a young man?"

"To all of them, Monsieur, and he comes back to me in the morning in an unbelievable condition. You see, it's regret that leads him on and that makes him put a pasteboard face over his own. Yes, the

regret of no longer being what he was and of no longer making any conquests! ”

He was sleeping now and beginning to snore. She looked at him with a pitying expression, and continued: “ Oh! how many conquests that man has made! more than one could believe, Monsieur, more than the finest gentlemen of the world, than all the tenors and all the generals.”

“ Really? What did he do? ”

“ Oh! that will surprise you at first, as you did not know him in his palmy days. When I met him it was also at a ball, for he has always frequented them. As soon as I saw him I was caught—caught like a fish on a hook. Ah! how pretty he was, Monsieur, with his curly raven locks and black eyes as large as saucers! Indeed, he was good-looking! He took me away that evening, and I never have left him since, never, not even for a day, no matter what he did! Oh! he has shown me some bad times! ”

The doctor asked: “ Are you married? ”

She answered simply: “ Yes, Monsieur . . . otherwise he would have dropped me as he did the others. I have been his wife and his servant, everything, everything that he wished . . . how he has made me cry . . . tears which I did not show him! for he would tell all his adventures to me . . . to me, Monsieur . . . without understanding how it hurt me to listen . . . ”

“ But what was his business? ”

“ That’s so . . . I forgot to tell you. He was the foreman at Martel’s . . . a foreman such as they never had had . . . an artist who averaged ten francs an hour . . . ”

“ Martel? . . . who is Martel? . . . ”

“ The hairdresser, Monsieur, the great hair-



dresser of the Opéra, who had all the actresses for customers. Yes, sir, all the smartest actresses had their hair dressed by Ambrose; and they would give him tips that made a fortune for him. Ah! Monsieur, all the women are alike, yes, all of them. When a man pleases their fancy they offer themselves to him. It is so easy. . . . And it hurt me so to hear about it. For he would tell me everything . . . he simply could not hold his tongue . . . it was impossible. Those things please the men so much! They seem to get even more enjoyment out of telling than doing.

“ When I would see him coming in the evening, a little pale, with a pleased look and a bright eye, I would say to myself: ‘ One more. I am sure that he has caught one more.’ Then I felt a wild desire to question him, and then again not to know, to stop his talking if he should begin. And we would look at each other.

“ I knew that he would not keep still, that he would come to the point. I could feel that from his manner, which seemed to laugh and say: ‘ I had a good adventure to-day, Madeleine.’ I would pretend to notice nothing, to guess nothing; I would set the table, bring on the soup, and sit opposite him.

“ At those times, Monsieur, it was as if my friendship for him had been crushed in my body with a stone. It hurt. But he did not grasp it, he did not know; he felt a need to tell all those things to some one, to boast, to show how much he was loved . . . and I was the only one he had to whom he could talk . . . the only one. And I would have to listen and drink it in, like poison.

“ He would begin to take his soup, and then he would say: ‘ One more, Madeleine.’



“ And I would think: ‘ Here it comes! Goodness! what a man! Why did I ever meet him? ’

“ Then he would begin: ‘ One more! And a beauty, too . . . ’ And it would be some little one from the Vaudeville or else from the Variétés, and some of the big ones, too, some of the most famous. He would tell me their names, how their apartments were furnished, everything, everything, Monsieur. Heart-breaking details. And he would go over them and tell his story over again from beginning to end, so pleased at himself that I would pretend to laugh so that he would not get angry with me.

“ Everything may not have been true! He liked to glorify himself, and was quite capable of inventing such things! They may perhaps also have been true! On those evenings he would pretend to be tired, and wish to go to bed after supper. We would take supper at eleven, Monsieur, for he could never get back from work earlier.

“ When he had finished telling about his adventure, he would walk around the room and smoke cigarettes; and he was so handsome, with his mustache and curly hair, that I would think: ‘ It’s true, just the same, what he is telling. Since I myself am crazy about that man, why should not the others be the same? ’ Then I would feel like crying, shrieking, running away, and jumping out of the window, while I was clearing the table and he was smoking. He would yawn in order to show how tired he was, and he would say two or three times before going to bed: ‘ Ah! how well I shall sleep this evening! ’

“ I bear him no ill will, because he did not know how he was hurting me. No, he could not know! He loved to boast about the women just as a peacock loves to show his feathers. He got to the point

where he thought that all of them looked at him and desired him.

“ It was hard when he grew old. Oh! Monsieur I saw his first white hair. I felt a terrible shock, and then a great joy—a bad joy—but so great, so great! I said to myself: ‘ It’s the end . . . it’s the end.’ It seemed as if I were about to be released from prison. At last I could have him to myself, all to myself, when the others would no longer want him.

“ It was one morning, in bed. He was still sleeping, and I leaned over him to wake him up with a kiss, when I noticed in his curls, over his temple, a little thread which shone like silver. What a surprise! I should not have thought it possible! At first I thought of tearing it out so that he would not see it, but as I looked carefully, I noticed another, farther up. White hairs! He was going to have white hairs! My heart began to thump, and perspiration stood out all over me; but away down at the bottom I was happy!

“ It was mean to feel thus, but I did my housework with a light heart that morning, without waking him up; and, as soon as he opened his eyes of his own accord, I said to him: ‘ Do you know what I discovered while you were asleep? ’

“ ‘ No.’

“ ‘ I found white hairs.’

“ He started up as if I had tickled him, and said angrily: ‘ It’s not true! ’

“ ‘ Yes, it is; there are four of them over your left temple.’

“ He jumped out of bed, and ran over to the mirror. He could not find them. Then I showed him the first one, the lowest, the little curly one, and I said: ‘ It’s no wonder, after the life that you

have been leading. In two years all will be over for you.'

"Well, Monsieur, I had spoken true; two years later one could not recognize him. How quickly a man changes! He was still handsome, but he had lost his freshness, and the women no longer ran after him. Ah! what a life I led at that time! How he treated me! Nothing suited him. He left his trade to go into the hat business, in which he ate up all his money. Then he unsuccessfully tried to be an actor, and finally he began to frequent public balls. Fortunately, he had had common sense enough to save a little something, on which we now live. It is sufficient, but it is not enormous. And to think that at one time he almost had a fortune!

"Now you see what he does. This habit holds him like a frenzy. He has to be young; he has to dance with women who smell of perfume and cosmetic. You poor old darling!"

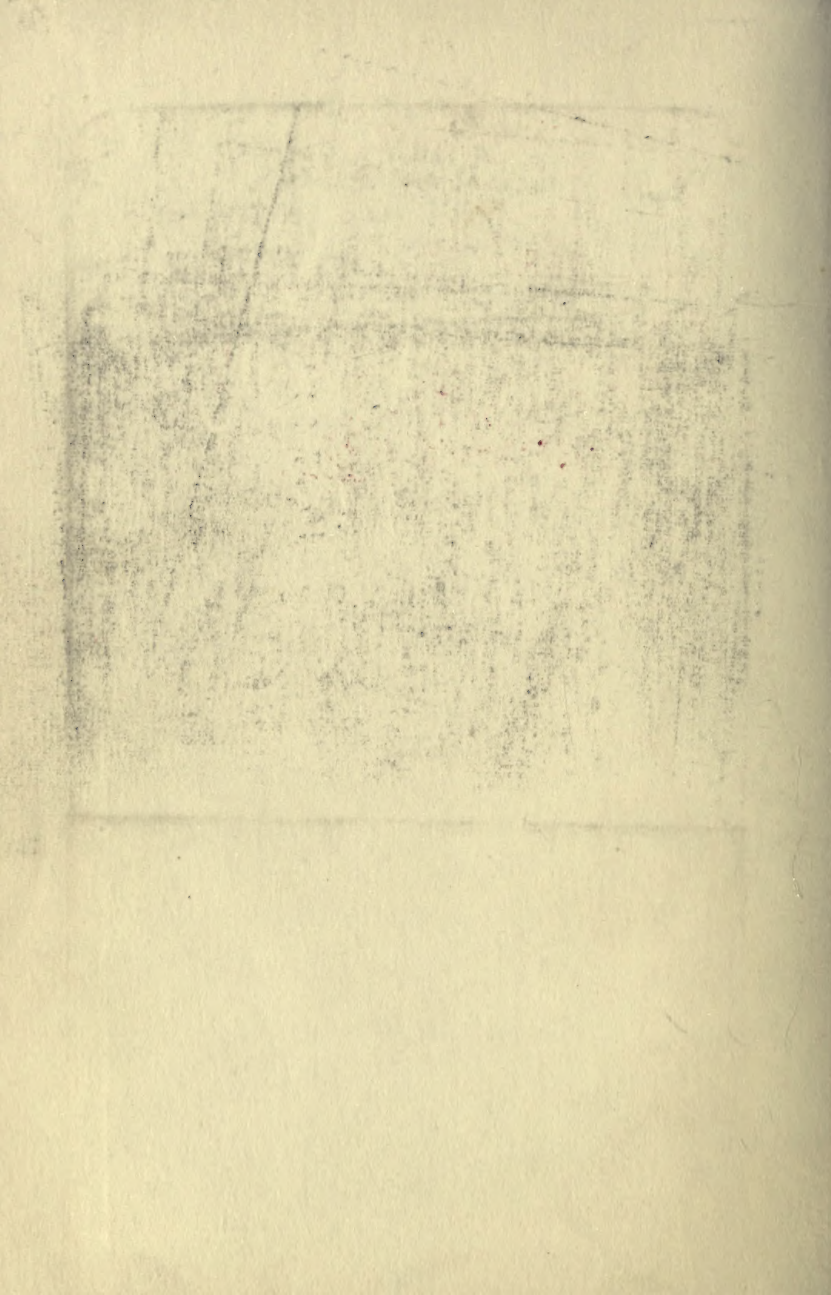
She was looking at her old snoring husband fondly, ready to cry. Then, gently tiptoeing up to him, she kissed his hair. The physician had risen and was getting ready to leave, finding nothing to say to this strange couple. Just as he was leaving, she asked:

"Would you mind giving me your address? If he should grow worse, I could call for you."









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